Penguin

# The Mahabharata

***Volume 1***

*(Sections 1 to 15)*

*Translated by*
*BIBEK DEBROY*

PENGUIN BOOKS

# Contents

## About the Translator

Bibek Debroy is an economist and is Research Professor (Centre of Policy Research) and Contributing Editor (Indian Express group). He has worked in universities, research institutes, industry and for the government. He has published books, papers and popular articles in economics. But he has also published in Indology and translated (into English) the Vedas, the Puranas, the Upanishads and the Gita (Penguin India, 2005). His book *Sarama and her Children: The Dog in Indian Myth* (Penguin India, 2008) splices his interest in Hinduism with his love for dogs. He is currently translating the remaining volumes of the unabridged Mahabharata.

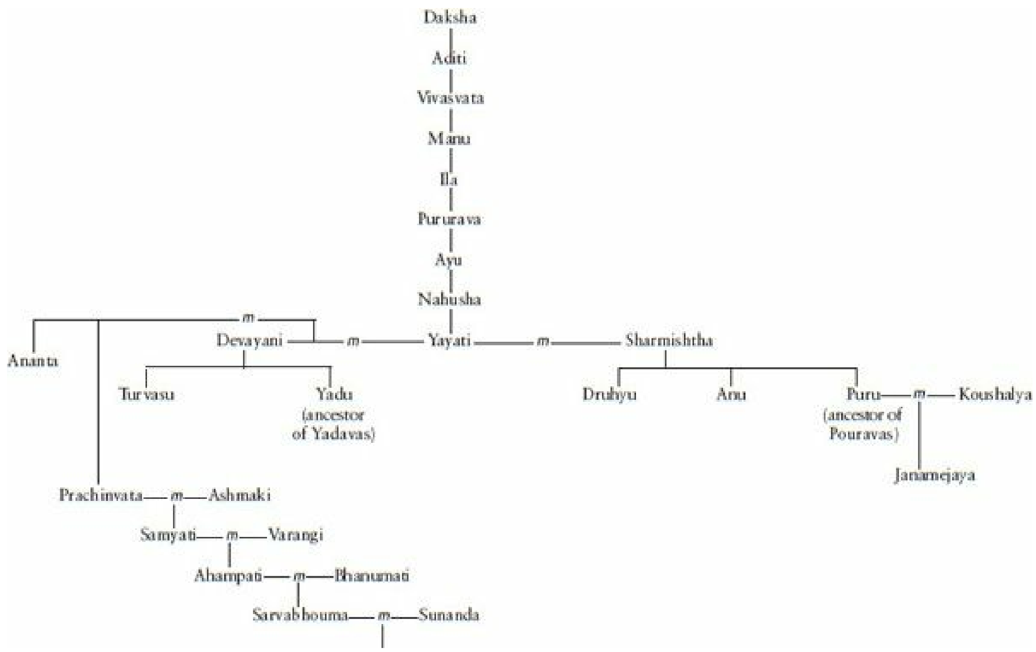
*For Suparna Banerjee*

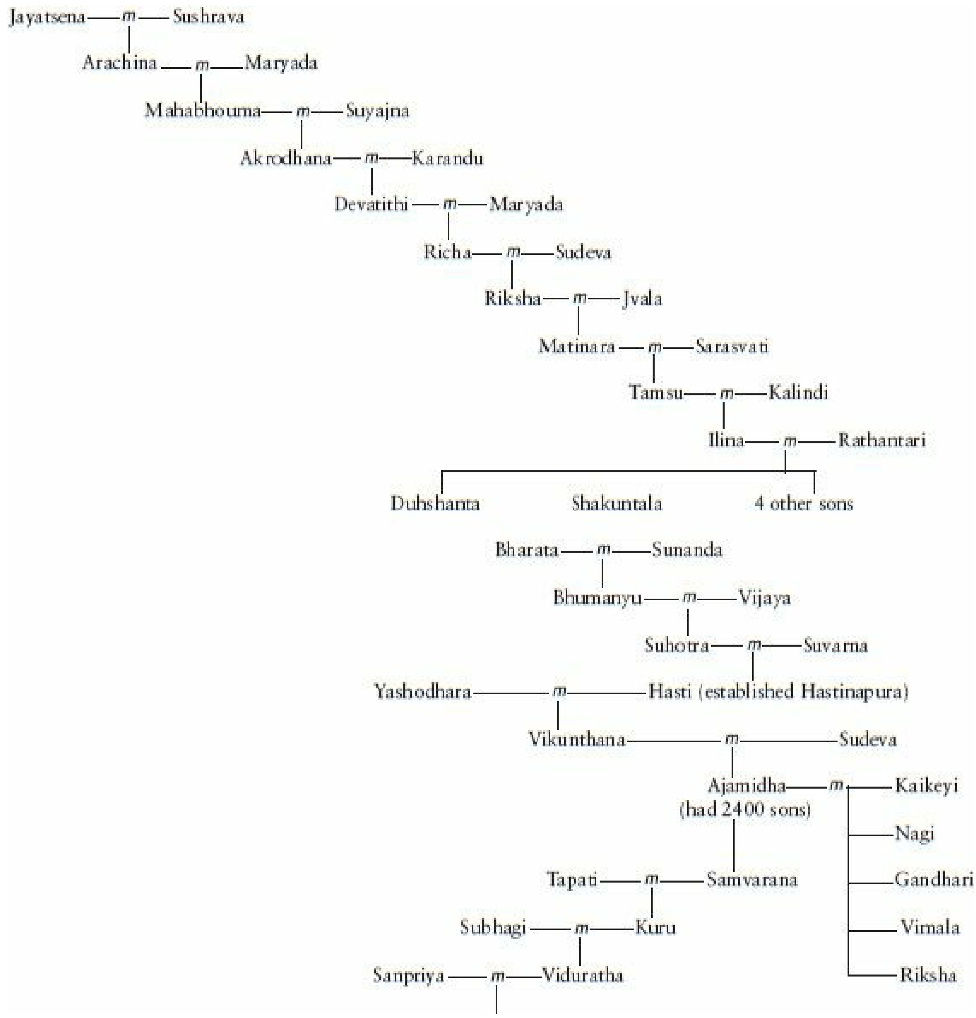
*Ardha bhāryāmanuṣyasya bhāryā śreṣṭhatamaḥ sakhā*
*Bhāryā mulaṁ trivargasya bhāryāmitraṁ mariṣyataḥ*

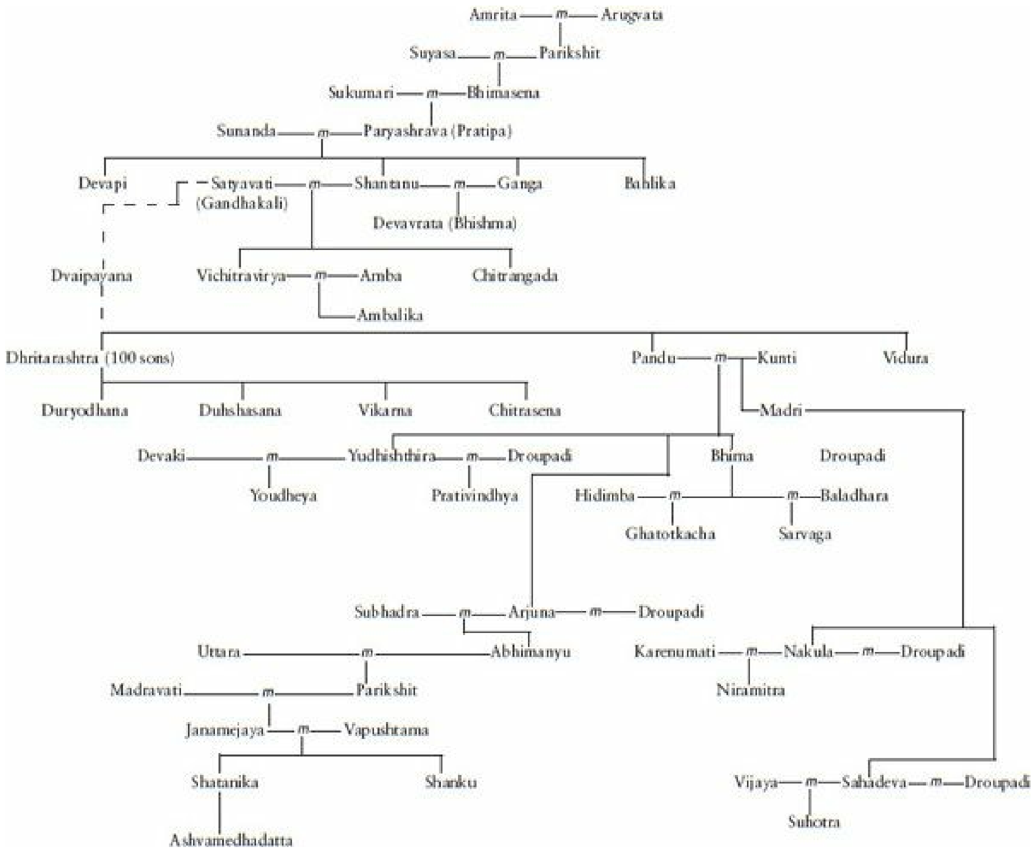
Mahabharata (1/68/40)

# Family Tree

## *Bharata/Puru Lineage*

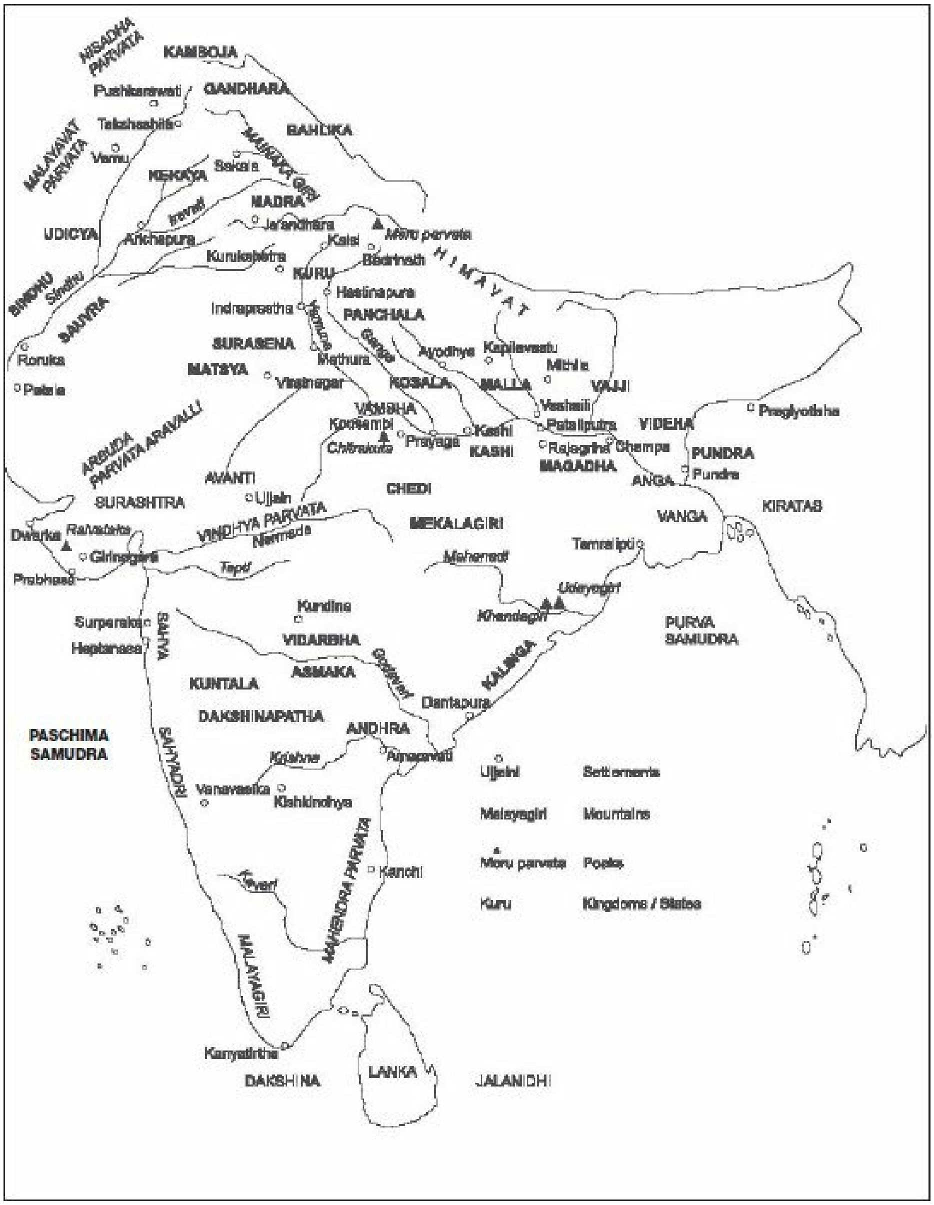



Jayatsena — m — Sushrava
Arachina — m — Maryada
Mahabhouma — m — Suyajna
Akrodhana — m — Karandu
Devatithi — m — Maryada
Richa — m — Sudeva
Riksha — m — Jvala
Matinara — m — Sarasvati
Tamsu — m — Kalindi
Ilina — m — Rathantari
Duhshanta
Shakuntala
4 other sons
Bharata — m — Sunanda
Bhumanyu — m — Vijaya
Suhotra — m — Suvarna
Yashodhara — m — Hasti (established Hastinapura)
Vikunthana — m — Sudeva
Ajamidha — m — Kaikeyi
(had 2400 sons)
Nagi
Gandhari
Vimala
Riksha
Tapati — m — Samvarana
Subhagi — m — Kuru
Sanpriya — m — Viduratha


Amrita — m — Arugvata
Suyasa — m — Parikshit
Sukumari — m — Bhimasena
Sunanda — m — Paryashrava (Pratipa)
Devapi
Satyavati (Gandhakali) — m — Shantanu — m — Ganga
Bahlika
Devavrata (Bhishma)
Dvaipayana
Vichitravirya — m — Amba
Ambalika
Chitrangada
Dhritarashtra (100 sons)
Pandu — m — Kunti
Madri
Vidura
Duryodhana
Duhshasana
Vikarna
Chitrasena
Devaki — m — Yudhishthira — m — Droupadi
Youdheya
Prativindhya
Bhima
Droupadi
Hidimba — m
m — Baladhara
Ghatotkacha
Sarvaga
Subhadra — m — Arjuna — m — Droupadi
Uttara — m — Abhimanyu
Karenumati — m — Nakula — m — Droupadi
Niramitra
Madravati — m — Parikshit
Janamejaya — m — Vapushtama
Shatanika
Shanku
Ashvamedhadatta
Vijaya — m — Sahadeva — m — Droupadi
Suhotra

# Map of Bharatavarsha

BHARATAVARSHA (SIXTH CENTURY BCE)



# Introduction

The Hindu tradition has an amazingly large corpus of religious texts, spanning Vedas, Vedanta (*brahmanas,*[1]*aranyakas,*[2] Upanishads,), Vedangas,[3]*smritis*, Puranas, dharmashastras and *itihasa*. For most of these texts, especially if one excludes classical Sanskrit literature, we don't quite know when they were composed and by whom, not that one is looking for single authors. Some of the minor Puranas (Upa Purana) are of later vintage. For instance, the Bhavishya Purana (which is often listed as a major Purana or Maha Purana) mentions Queen Victoria.

In the listing of the corpus above figures itihasa, translated into English as history. History doesn't entirely capture the nuance of itihasa, which is better translated as 'this is indeed what happened'. Itihasa isn't myth or fiction. It is a chronicle of what happened; it is fact. Or so runs the belief. And itihasa consists of India's two major epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The former is believed to have been composed as poetry and the latter as prose. This isn't quite correct. The Ramayana has segments in prose and the Mahabharata has segments in poetry. Itihasa doesn't quite belong to the category of religious texts in a way that the Vedas and Vedanta are religious. However, the dividing line between what is religious and what is not is fuzzy. After all, itihasa is also about attaining the objectives of *dharma,*[4]*artha,*[5]*kama*[6] and *moksha*[7] and the Mahabharata includes Hinduism's most important spiritual text—the Bhagavad Gita.

The epics are not part of the *shruti* tradition. That tradition is like revelation, without any composer. The epics are part of the *smriti* tradition. At the time they were composed, there was no question of texts being written down. They were recited, heard, memorized and passed down through the generations. But the smriti tradition had composers. The Ramayana was composed by Valmiki, regarded as the first poet or *kavi*. The word kavi has a secondary meaning as poet or rhymer. The primary meaning of kavi is someone who is wise. And in that sense, the composer of the Mahabharata was no less wise. This was Vedavyasa or Vyasadeva. He was so named because he classified (*vyasa*) the Vedas. Vedavyasa or Vyasadeva isn't a proper name. It is a title. Once in a while, in accordance with the needs of the era, the Vedas need to be classified. Each such person obtains the title and there have been twenty-eight Vyasadevas so far.

At one level, the question about who composed the Mahabharata is a pointless. According to popular belief and according to what the Mahabharata itself states, it was composed by Krishna Dvaipayana Vedavyasa (Vyasadeva). But the text was not composed and cast in stone at a single point in time. Multiple authors kept adding layers and embellishing it. Sections just kept getting added and it is no one's suggestion that Krishna Dvaipayana Vedavyasa composed the text of the Mahabharata as it stands

today.

Consequently, the Mahabharata is far more unstructured than the Ramayana. The major sections of the Ramayana are known as *kanda*s and one meaning of the word kanda is the stem or trunk of a tree, suggesting solidity. The major sections of the Mahabharata are known as *parva*s and while one meaning of the word parva is limb or member or joint, in its nuance there is greater fluidity in the word parva than in kanda.

The Vyasadeva we are concerned with had a proper name of Krishna Dvaipayana. He was born on an island (*dvipa*). That explains the Dvaipayana part of the name. He was dark. That explains the Krishna part of the name. (It wasn't only the incarnation of Vishnu who had the name of Krishna.) Krishna Dvaipayana Vedavyasa was also related to the protagonists of the Mahabharata story. To go back to the origins, the Ramayana is about the solar dynasty, while the Mahabharata is about the lunar dynasty. As is to be expected, the lunar dynasty begins with Soma (the moon) and goes down through Pururava (who married the famous apsara Urvashi), Nahusha and Yayati. Yayati became old, but wasn't ready to give up the pleasures of life. He asked his sons to temporarily loan him their youth. All but one refused. The ones who refused were cursed that they would never be kings, and this includes the Yadavas (descended from Yadu). The one who agreed was Puru and the lunar dynasty continued through him. Puru's son Duhshanta was made famous by Kalidasa in the Duhshanta–Shakuntala story and their son was Bharata, contributing to the name of Bharatavarsha. Bharata's grandson was Kuru. We often tend to think of the Kouravas as the evil protagonists in the Mahabharata story and the Pandavas as the good protagonists. Since Kuru was a common ancestor, the appellation Kourava applies equally to Yudhishthira and his brothers and Duryodhana and his brothers. Kuru's grandson was Shantanu. Through Satyavati, Shantanu fathered Chitrangada and Vichitravirya. However, the sage Parashara had already fathered Krishna Dvaipayana through Satyavati. And Shantanu had already fathered Bhishma through Ganga. Dhritarasthra and Pandu were fathered on Vichitravirya's wives by Krishna Dvaipayana.

The story of the epic is also about these antecedents and consequents. The core Mahabharata story is known to every Indian and is normally understood as a dispute between the Kouravas (descended from Dhritarashtra) and the Pandavas (descended from Pandu). However, this is a distilled version, which really begins with Shantanu. The non-distilled version takes us to the roots of the genealogical tree and at several points along this tree we confront a problem with impotence/sterility/death, resulting in offspring through a surrogate father. Such sons were accepted in that day and age. Nor was this a lunar dynasty problem alone. In the Ramayana, Dasharatha of the solar dynasty also had an infertility problem, corrected through a sacrifice. To return to the genealogical tree, the Pandavas won the Kurukshetra war. However, their five sons through Droupadi were killed. So was Bhima's son Ghatotkacha, fathered on Hidimba.

As was Arjuna's son Abhimanyu, fathered on Subhadra. Abhimanyu's son Parikshit inherited the throne in Hastinapura, but was killed by a serpent. Parikshit's son was Janamejaya.

Krishna Dvaipayana Vedavyasa's powers of composition were remarkable. Having classified the Vedas, he composed the Mahabharata in 100,000 shlokas or couplets. Today's Mahabharata text doesn't have that many shlokas, even if the Hari Vamsha (regarded as the epilogue to the Mahabharata) is included. One reaches around 90,000 shlokas. That too, is a gigantic number. (The Mahabharata is almost four times the size of the Ramayana and is longer than any other epic anywhere in the world.) For a count of 90,000 Sanskrit shlokas, we are talking about something in the neighbourhood of two million words. The text of the Mahabharata tells us that Krishna Dvaipayana finished this composition in three years. This doesn't necessarily mean that he composed 90,000 shlokas. The text also tells us that there are three versions to the Mahabharata. The original version was called Jaya and had 8,800 shlokas. This was expanded to 24,000 shlokas and called Bharata. Finally, it was expanded to 90,000 (or 100,000) shlokas and called Mahabharata.

Krishna Dvaipayana didn't rest even after that. He composed the eighteen Maha Puranas, adding another 400,000 shlokas. Having composed the Mahabharata, he taught it to his disciple Vaishampayana. When Parikshit was killed by a serpent, Janamejaya organized a snake-sacrifice to destroy the serpents. With all the sages assembled there, Vaishampayana turned up and the assembled sages wanted to know the story of the Mahabharata, as composed by Krishna Dvaipayana. Janamejaya also wanted to know why Parikshit had been killed by the serpent. That's the background against which the epic is recited. However, there is another round of recounting too. Much later, the sages assembled for a sacrifice in Naimisharanya and asked Lomaharshana (alternatively, Romaharshana) to recite what he had heard at Janamejaya's snake-sacrifice. Lomaharshana was a *suta*, the sutas being charioteers and bards or raconteurs. As the son of a suta, Lomaharshana is also referred to as Souti. But Souti or Lomaharshana aren't quite his proper names. His proper name is Ugrashrava. Souti refers to his birth. He owes the name Lomaharshana to the fact that the body-hair (*loma* or *roma*) stood up (*harshana*) on hearing his tales. Within the text therefore, two people are telling the tale. Sometimes it is Vaishampayana and sometimes it is Lomaharshana. Incidentally, the stories of the Puranas are recounted by Lomaharshana, without Vaishampayana intruding. Having composed the Puranas, Krishna Dvaipayana taught them to his disciple Lomaharshana. For what it is worth, there are scholars who have used statistical tests to try and identify the multiple authors of the Mahabharata.

As we are certain there were multiple authors rather than a single one, the question of when the Mahabharata was composed is somewhat pointless. It wasn't composed on a single date. It was composed over a span of more than 1000 years, perhaps between

800 BCE and 400 ACE. It is impossible to be more accurate than that. There is a difference between dating the composition and dating the incidents, such as the date of the Kurukshetra war. Dating the incidents is both subjective and controversial and irrelevant for the purposes of this translation. A timeline of 1000 years isn't short. But even then, the size of the corpus is nothing short of amazing.

Familiarity with Sanskrit is dying out. The first decades of the twenty-first century are quite unlike the first decades of the twentieth. Lamentation over what is inevitable serves no purpose. English is increasingly becoming the global language, courtesy colonies (North America, South Asia, East Asia, Australia, New Zealand, Africa) rather than the former colonizer. If familiarity with the corpus is not to die out, it needs to be accessible in English.

There are many different versions or recensions of the Mahabharata. However, between 1919 and 1966, the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI) in Pune produced what has come to be known as the critical edition. This is an authenticated text produced by a board of scholars and seeks to eliminate later interpolations, unifying the text across the various regional versions. This is the text followed in this translation. One should also mention that the critical edition's text is not invariably smooth. Sometimes, the transition from one shloka to another is abrupt, because the intervening shloka has been weeded out. With the intervening shloka included, a non-critical version of the text sometimes makes better sense. On a few occasions, I have had the temerity to point this out in the notes which I have included in my translation.

It took a long time for this critical edition to be put together. The exercise began in 1919. Without the Hari Vamsha, the complete critical edition became available in 1966. And with the Hari Vamsha, the complete critical edition became available in 1970. Before this, there were regional variations in the text and the main versions were available from Bengal, Bombay and the south. However, now, one should stick to the critical edition, though there are occasional instances where there are reasons for dissatisfaction with what the scholars of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute have accomplished. But in all fairness, there are two published versions of the critical edition. The first one has the bare bones of the critical edition's text. The second has all the regional versions collated, with copious notes. The former is for the ordinary reader, assuming he/she knows Sanskrit. And the latter is for the scholar. Consequently, some popular beliefs no longer find a place in the critical edition's text. For example, it is believed that Vedavyasa dictated the text to Ganesha, who wrote it down. But Ganesha had a condition before accepting. Vedavyasa would have to dictate continuously, without stopping. Vedavyasa threw in a counter-condition. Ganesha would have to understand each couplet before he wrote it down. To flummox Ganesha and give himself

time to think, Vedavyasa threw in some cryptic verses. This attractive anecdote has been excised from the critical edition's text. Barring material that is completely religious (specific hymns or the Bhagavad Gita), the Sanskrit text is reasonably easy to understand. Oddly, I have had the most difficulty with things that Vidura has sometimes said. Arya has today come to connote ethnicity. Originally, it meant language. That is, those who spoke Sanskrit were Aryas. Those who did not speak Sanskrit were mlecchas. Vidura is supposed to have been skilled in the mlechha language. Is that the reason why some of Vidura's statements seem obscure? In similar vein, in popular renderings, when Droupadi is being disrobed, she prays to Krishna. Krishna provides the never-ending stream of garments that stump Duhshasana. The critical edition has excised the prayer to Krishna. The never-ending stream of garments is given as an extraordinary event. However, there is no intervention from Krishna.

How is the Mahabharata classified? The core component is the couplet or shloka. Several such shlokas form a chapter or *adhyaya*. Several adhyayas form a parva. Most people probably think that the Mahabharata has eighteen parvas. This is true, but there is another 100-parva classification that is indicated in the text itself. That is, the adhyayas can be classified either according to eighteen parvas or according to 100 parvas. The table (given on pp. xxiii–xxvi), based on the critical edition, should make this clear. As the table shows, the present critical edition only has ninety-eight parvas of the 100-parva classification, though the 100 parvas are named in the text.

| *Eighteen-parva classification* | *100-parva classification* | *Number of adhyayas* | *Number of shlokas* |
|---|---|---|---|
| (1) Adi | 1) Anukramanika[8] | 1 | 210 |
| | 2) Parvasamgraha | 1 | 243 |
| | 3) Poushya | 1 | 195 |
| | 4) Pouloma | 9 | 153 |
| | 5) Astika | 41 | 1025 |
| | 6) Adi-vamshavatarana | 5 | 257 |
| | 7) Sambhava | 65 | 2394 |
| | 8) Jatugriha-daha | 15 | 373 |
| | 9) Hidimba-vadha | 6 | 169 |
| | 10) Baka-vadha | 8 | 206 |
| | 11) Chaitraratha | 21 | 557 |
| | 12) Droupadi-svayamvara | 12 | 263 |
| | 13) Vaivahika | 6 | 155 |
| | 14) Viduragamana | 7 | 174 |

[8] Anukramanika is sometimes called Anukramani.

| *Eighteen-parva classification* | *100-parva classification* | *Number of adhyayas* | *Number of shlokas* |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 15) Rajya-labha | 1 | 50 |
| | 16) Arjuna-vanavasa | 11 | 295 |
| | 17) Subhadra-harana | 2 | 57 |
| | 18) Haranaharika | 1 | 82 |
| | 19) Khandava-daha | 12 | 344 |
| | | Total = 225 | Total = 7202 |
| (2) Sabha | 20) Sabha | 11 | 429 |
| | 21) Mantra | 6 | 222 |
| | 22) Jarasandha-vadha | 5 | 195 |
| | 23) Digvijaya | 7 | 188 |
| | 24) Rajasuya | 3 | 97 |
| | 25) Arghabhirana | 4 | 99 |
| | 26) Shishupala-vadha | 6 | 191 |
| | 27) Dyuta | 23 | 734 |
| | 28) Anudyuta | 7 | 232 |
| | | Total = 72 | Total = 2387 |
| (3) Aranyaka | 29) Aranyaka | 11 | 327 |
| | 30) Kirmira-vadha | 1 | 75 |
| | 31) Kairata | 30 | 1158 |
| | 32) Indralokabhigamana | 37 | 1157 |
| | 33) Tirtha-yatra | 74 | 2422 |
| | 34) Jatasura-vadha | 1 | 61 |
| | 35) Yaksha-yuddha | 18 | 710 |
| | 36) Ajagara | 6 | 201 |
| | 37) Markandeya-samasya | 43 | 1656 |
| | 38) Droupadi-Satyabhama-sambada | 3 | 88 |
| | 39) Ghosha-yatra | 19 | 519 |
| | 40) Mriga-svapna-bhaya | 1 | 16 |
| | 41) Vrihi-drounika | 3 | 117 |
| | 42) Droupadi-harana | 36 | 1247 |
| | 43) Kundala-harana | 11 | 294 |
| | 44) Araneya | 5 | 191 |
| | | Total = 299 | Total = 10239 |
| (4) Virata | 45) Vairata | 12 | 271 |
| | 46) Kichaka-vadha | 11 | 353 |
| | 47) Go-grahana | 39 | 933 |
| | 48) Vaivahika | 5 | 179 |
| | | Total = 67 | Total = 1736 |

| *Eighteen-parva classification* | *100-parva classification* | *Number of adhyayas* | *Number of shlokas* |
|---|---|---|---|
| (5) Udyoga | 49) Udyoga | 21 | 575 |
| | 50) Sanjaya-yana | 11 | 274 |
| | 51) Prajagara | 9 | 541 |
| | 52) Sanatsujata | 4 | 121 |
| | 53) Yana-sandhi | 24 | 709 |
| | 54) Bhagavad-dhyana | 65 | 2053 |
| | 55) Karnopani-vadha | 14 | 351 |
| | 56) Abhiniryana | 4 | 169 |
| | 57) Bhishmabhishechana | 4 | 122 |
| | 58) Uluka-yana | 4 | 100 |
| | 59) Rathatiratha-sankhyana | 9 | 231 |
| | 60) Ambopakhyana | 28 | 755 |
| | | Total = 197 | Total = 6001 |
| (6) Bhishma | 61) Jambukhanda-vinirmana | 11 | 377 |
| | 62) Bhumi | 2 | 87 |
| | 63) Bhagavad-gita | 27 | 974 |
| | 64) Bhishma-vadha | 77 | 3943 |
| | | Total = 117 | Total = 5381 |
| (7) Drona | 65) Dronabhisheka | 15 | 634 |
| | 66) Samshaptaka-vadha | 16 | 717 |
| | 67) Abhimanyu-vadha | 20 | 640 |
| | 68) Pratijna | 9 | 365 |
| | 69) Jayadratha-vadha | 61 | 2834 |
| | 70) Ghatotkacha-vadha | 33 | 1645 |
| | 71) Drona-vadha | 11 | 692 |
| | 72) Narayanastra-moksha | 8 | 542 |
| | | Total = 173 | Total = 8069 |
| (8) Karna | 73) Karna-vadha | 69 | 3870 |
| (9) Shalya | 74) Shalya-vadha | 16 | 1074 |
| | 75) Hrada-pravesha | 12 | 664 |
| | 76) Tirtha-yatra | 25 | 1258 |
| | 77) Gada-yuddha | 11 | 545 |
| | | Total = 64 | Total = 3541 |
| (10) Souptika | 78) Souptika | 9 | 514 |
| | 79) Aishika | 9 | 257 |
| | | Total = 18 | Total = 771 |

| Eighteen-parva classification | 100-parva classification | Number of adhyayas | Number of shlokas |
|---|---|---|---|
| (11) Stri | 80) Vishoka | 8 | 177 |
| | 81) Stri | 17 | 468 |
| | 82) Shraddha | 1 | 44 |
| | 83) Jala-pradanika | 1 | 24 |
| | | Total = 27 | Total = 713 |
| (12) Shanti | 84) Raja-dharma | 128 | 4511 |
| | 85) Apad-dharma | 39 | 1560 |
| | 86) Moksha-dharma | 186 | 6935 |
| | | Total = 353 | Total = 13006 |
| (13) Anushasana | 87) Dana-dharma | 152 | 6409 |
| | 88) Bhishma-svargarohana | 2 | 84 |
| | | Total = 154 | Total = 6493 |
| (14) Ashva-medhika | 89) Ashvamedha | 96 | 2741 |
| (15) Ashra-mavasika | 90) Ashrama-vasa | 35 | 736 |
| | 91) Putra-darshana | 9 | 234 |
| | 92) Naradagamana | 3 | 91 |
| | | Total = 47 | Total = 1061 |
| (16) Mousala | 93) Mousala | 9 | 273 |
| (17) Mahapra-sthanika | 94) Mahaprasthanika | 3 | 106 |
| (18) Svargarohana | 95) Svargarohana | 5 | 194 |
| Hari Vamsha | 96) Hari-vamsha | 45 | 2442 |
| | 97) Vishnu | 68 | 3426 |
| | 98) Bhavishya | 5 | 205 |
| | | Total = 118 | Total = 6073 |
| Grand total = 19 | Grand total = 98 (95 + 3) | Grand total = 2113 (1995 + 118) | Grand total = 79,857 (73784 + 6073) |

Thus, interpreted in terms of BORI's critical edition, the Mahabharata no longer possesses the 100,000 shlokas it is supposed to have. The figure is a little short of 75,000 (73,784 to be precise). Should the Hari Vamsha be included in a translation of the Mahabharata? It doesn't quite belong. Yet, it is described as a *khila* or supplement to the Mahabharata and BORI includes it as part of the critical edition, though in a separate volume. Hence, I have included the Hari Vamsha in this translation as well. With the Hari Vamsha, the number of shlokas increases to a shade less than 80,000 (79,857 to be precise). However, in some of the regional versions the text of the Mahabharata proper is closer to 85,000 shlokas and with the Hari Vamsha included, one approaches 95,000, though one doesn't quite touch 100,000.

Why should there be another translation of the Mahabharata? Surely, it must have been translated innumerable times. Contrary to popular impression, unabridged translations of the Mahabharata in English are extremely rare. One should not confuse

abridged translations with unabridged versions. There are only five unabridged translations—by Kisori Mohan Ganguly (1883–96), by Manmatha Nath Dutt (1895–1905), by the University of Chicago and J.A.B. van Buitenen (1973 onwards), by P. Lal and Writers Workshop (2005 onwards) and the Clay Sanskrit Library edition (2005 onwards). Of these, P. Lal is more a poetic trans-creation than a translation. The Clay Sanskrit Library edition is not based on the critical edition, deliberately so. In the days of Ganguly and Dutt, the critical edition didn't exist. The language in these two versions is now archaic and there are some shlokas that these two translators decided not to include, believing them to be untranslatable in that day and age. Almost three decades later, the Chicago version is still not complete, and the Clay edition, not being translated in sequence, is still in progress. However, the primary reason for venturing into yet another translation is not just the vacuum that exists, but also reason for dissatisfaction with other attempts. Stated more explicitly, this translation, I believe, is better and more authentic—but I leave it to the reader to be the final judge. (While translating 80,000 shlokas is a hazardous venture, since Ganguly, Dutt and Lal are Bengalis, surely a fourth Bengali must also be preeminently qualified to embark on this venture!)

A few comments on the translation are now in order. First, there is the vexed question of diacritical marks—should they be used or not? Diacritical marks make the translation and pronunciation more accurate, but often put readers off. Sacrificing academic purity, there is thus a conscious decision to avoid diacritical marks. Second, since diacritical marks are not being used, Sanskrit words and proper names are written in what seems to be phonetically natural and the closest—such as, Droupadi rather than Draupadi. There are rare instances where avoidance of diacritical marks can cause minor confusion, for example, between Krishna (Krishnaa) as in Droupadi[9] and Krishna as in Vaasudeva. However, such instances are extremely rare and the context should make these differences, which are mostly of the gender kind, clear. Third, there are some words that simply cannot be translated. One such word is dharma. More accurately, such words are translated the first time they occur. But on subsequent occasions, they are romanized in the text. Fourth, the translation sticks to the Sanskrit text as closely as possible. If the text uses the word Kounteya, this translation will leave it as Kounteya or Kunti's son and not attempt to replace it with Arjuna. Instead, there will be a note explaining that in that specific context Kounteya refers to Arjuna or, somewhat more rarely, Yudhishthira or Bhima. This is also the case in the structure of the English sentences. To cite an instance, if a metaphor occurs towards the beginning of the Sanskrit shloka, the English sentence attempts to retain it at the beginning too. Had this not been done, the English might have read smoother. But to the extent there is a trade-off, one has stuck to what is most accurate, rather than attempting to make the English smooth and less stilted.

As the table shows, the parvas (in the eighteen-parva classification) vary widely in length. The gigantic Aranyaka or Shanti Parva can be contrasted with the slim Mousala Parva. Breaking up the translation into separate volumes based on this eighteen-parva classification therefore doesn't work. The volumes will not be remotely similar in size. Most translators seem to keep a target of ten to twelve volumes when translating all the parvas. Assuming ten volumes, 10 per cent means roughly 200 chapters and 7000 shlokas. This works rather well for Adi Parva, but collapses thereafter. Most translators therefore have Adi Parva as the first volume and then handle the heterogeneity across the eighteen parvas in subsequent volumes. This translation approaches the break-up of volumes somewhat differently, in the sense that roughly 10 per cent of the text is covered in each volume. The complete text, as explained earlier, is roughly 200 chapters and 7,000 shlokas per volume. For example, then, this first volume has been cut off at 199 chapters and a little less than 6,500 shlokas. It includes 90 per cent of Adi Parva, but not all of it and covers the first fifteen parvas of the 100- (or 98-) parva classification.

The Mahabharata is one of the greatest stories ever told. It has plots and subplots and meanderings and digressions. It is much more than the core story of a war between the Kouravas and the Pandavas, which everyone is familiar with, the culmination of which was the battle in Kurukshetra. In the Adi Parva, there is a lot more which happens before the Kouravas and the Pandavas actually arrive on the scene. In the 100-parva classification, the Kouravas and the Pandavas don't arrive on the scene until Section 6.

From the Vedas and Vedanta literature, we know that Janamejaya and Parikshit were historical persons. From Patanjali's grammar and other contemporary texts, we know that the Mahabharata text existed by around 400 BCE. This need not of course be the final text of Mahabharata, but could have been the original text of Jaya. The Hindu eras or *yugas* are four in number—Satya (or Krita) Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dvapara Yuga and Kali Yuga. This cycle then repeats itself, with another Satya Yuga following Kali Yuga. The events of the Ramayana occurred in Treta Yuga. The events of the Mahabharata occurred in Dvapara Yuga. This is in line with Rama being Vishnu's seventh incarnation and Krishna being the eighth. (The ninth is Buddha and the tenth is Kalki.) We are now in Kali Yuga. Kali Yuga didn't begin with the Kurukshetra war. It began with Krishna's death, an event that occurred thirty-six years after the Kurukshetra war. Astronomical data do exist in the epic. These can be used to date the Kurukshetra war, or the advent of Kali Yuga. However, if the text was composed at different points in time, with additions and interpolations, internal consistency in astronomical data is unlikely. In popular belief, following two alternative astronomers, the Kurukshetra war has been dated to 3102 BCE (following Aryabhatta) and 2449 BCE (following Varahamihira).

This doesn't mesh with the timelines of Indian history. Mahapadma Nanda ascended the throne in 382 BCE, a historical fact on which there is no dispute. The Puranas have genealogical lists. Some of these state that 1050 years elapsed between Parikshit's birth and Mahapadma Nanda's ascension. Others state that 1015 years elapsed. (When numerals are written in words, it is easy to confuse 15 with 50.) This takes Parikshit's birth and the Kurukshetra war to around 1400 BCE. This is probably the best we can do, since we also know that the Kuru kingdom flourished between 1200 BCE and 800 BCE. To keep the record straight, archaeological material has been used to bring forward the date of the Kurukshetra war to around 900 BCE, the period of the Iron Age.

As was mentioned, in popular belief, the incidents of the Ramayana took place before the incidents of the Mahabharata. The Ramayana story also figures in the Mahabharata. However, there is no reference to any significant Mahabharata detail in the Ramayana. Nevertheless, from reading the text, one gets the sense that the Mahabharata represents a more primitive society than the Ramayana. The fighting in the Ramayana is more genteel and civilized. You don't have people hurling rocks and stones at each other, or fighting with trees and bare arms. Nor do people rip apart the enemy's chest and drink blood. The geographical knowledge in the Mahabharata is also more limited than in the Ramayana, both towards the east and towards the south. In popular belief, the Kurukshetra war occurred as a result of a dispute over land and the kingdom. That is true, in so far as the present text is concerned. However, another fight over cattle took place in the Virata Parva and the Pandavas were victorious in that too. This is not the place to expand on the argument. But it is possible to construct a plausible hypothesis that this was the core dispute. Everything else was added as later embellishments. The property dispute was over cattle and not land. In human evolution, cattle represents a more primitive form of property than land. In that stage, humankind is still partly nomadic and not completely settled. If this hypothesis is true, the Mahabharata again represents an earlier period compared to the Ramayana. This leads to the following kind of proposition. In its final form, the Mahabharata was indeed composed after the Ramayana. But the earliest version of the Mahabharata was composed before the earliest version of the Ramayana. And the events of the Mahabharata occurred before the events of the Ramayana, despite popular belief. The proposition about the feud ending with Virata Parva illustrates the endless speculation that is possible with the Mahabharata material. Did Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva ever exist? Nakula and Sahadeva have limited roles to play in the story. Arjuna's induction could have been an attempt to assert Indra's supremacy. Arjuna represents such an integral strand in the story (and of the Bhagavad Gita), that such a suggestion is likely to be dismissed out of hand. But consider the following. Droupadi loved Arjuna a little bit more than the others. That's the reason she was denied admission to heaven. Throughout the text, there are innumerable instances where Droupadi faces difficulties. Does she ever summon

Arjuna for help on such occasions? No, she does not. She summons Bhima. Therefore, did Arjuna exist at all? Or were there simply two original Pandava brothers—one powerful and strong, and the other weak and useless in physical terms. Incidentally, the eighteen-parva classification is clearly something that was done much later. The 100-parva classification seems to be older.

The Mahabharata is much more real than the Ramayana. And, therefore, much more fascinating. Every conceivable human emotion figures in it, which is the reason why it is possible to identify with it even today. The text itself states that what is not found in the Mahabharata, will not be found anywhere else. Unlike the Ramayana, India is littered with real places that have identifications with the Mahabharata. (Ayodhya or Lanka or Chitrakuta are identifications that are less certain.) Kurukshetra, Hastinapura, Indraprastha, Karnal, Mathura, Dvaraka, Gurgaon, Girivraja are real places: the list is endless. In all kinds of unlikely places, one comes across temples erected by the Pandavas when they were exiled to the forest. In some of these places, archaeological excavations have substantiated the stories. The war for regional supremacy in the Ganga–Yamuna belt is also a plausible one. The Vrishnis and the Shurasenas (the Yadavas) are isolated, they have no clear alliance (before the Pandavas) with the powerful Kurus. There is the powerful Magadha kingdom under Jarasandha and Jarasandha had made life difficult for the Yadavas. He chased them away from Mathura to Dvaraka. Shishupala of the Chedi kingdom doesn't like Krishna and the Yadavas either. Through Kunti, Krishna has a matrimonial alliance with the Pandavas. Through Subhadra, the Yadavas have another matrimonial alliance with the Pandavas. Through another matrimonial alliance, the Pandavas obtain Drupada of Panchala as an ally. In the course of the royal sacrifice, Shishupala and Jarasandha are eliminated. Finally, there is yet another matrimonial alliance with Virata of the Matsya kingdom, through Abhimanyu. When the two sides face each other on the field of battle, they are more than evenly matched. Other than the Yadavas, the Pandavas have Panchala, Kashi, Magadha, Matsya and Chedi on their side. The Kouravas have Pragjyotisha, Anga, Kekaya, Sindhu, Avanti, Gandhara, Shalva, Bahlika and Kamboja as allies. At the end of the war, all these kings are slain and the entire geographical expanse comes under the control of the Pandavas and the Yadavas. Only Kripacharya, Ashvatthama and Kritavarma survive on the Kourava side.

Reading the Mahabharata, one forms the impression that it is based on some real incidents. That does not mean that a war on the scale that is described took place. Or that miraculous weapons and chariots were the norm. But there is such a lot of trivia, unconnected with the main story, that their inclusion seems to serve no purpose unless they were true depictions. For instance, what does the physical description of Kripa's sister and Drona's wife, Kripi, have to do with the main story? It is also more real than the Ramayana because nothing, especially the treatment of human emotions and

behaviour, exists in black and white. Everything is in shades of grey. The Uttara Kanda of the Ramayana is believed to have been a later interpolation. If one excludes the Uttara Kanda, we generally know what is good. We know who is good. We know what is bad. We know who is bad. The Ramayana is like a clichéd Bollywood film. This is never the case with the Mahabharata. However, a qualification is necessary. Most of us are aware of the Mahabharata story because we have read some version or the other, typically an abridged one. Every abridged version simplifies and condenses, distills out the core story. And in doing that, it tends to paint things in black and white, fitting everything into the mould of good and bad. The Kouravas are bad. The Pandavas are good. And good eventually triumphs. The unabridged Mahabharata is anything but that. It is much more nuanced. Duryodhana isn't invariably bad. He is referred to as Suyodhana as well, and not just by his father. History is always written from the point of view of the victors. While the Mahabharata is generally laudatory towards the Pandavas, there are several places where the text has a pro-Kourava stance. There are several places where the text has an anti-Krishna stance. That's yet another reason why one should read an unabridged version, so as not to miss out on these nuances. Take the simple point about inheritance of the kingdom. Dhritarashtra was blind. Consequently, the king was Pandu. On Pandu's death, who should inherit the kingdom? Yudhishthira was the eldest among the brothers. (Actually, Karna was, though it didn't become known until later.) We thus tend to assume that the kingdom was Yudhishthira's by right, because he was the eldest. (The division of the kingdom into two, Hastinapura and Indraprastha, is a separate matter.) But such primogeniture was not universally clear. A case can also be established for Duryodhana, because he was Dhritarashtra's son. If primogeniture was the rule, the eldest son of the Pandavas was Ghatotkacha, not Abhimanyu. Before both were killed, Ghatotkacha should have had a claim to the throne. However, there is no such suggestion anywhere. The argument that Ghatotkacha was the son of a rakshasa or demon will not wash. He never exhibited any demonic qualities and was a dutiful and loving son. Karna saved up a weapon for Arjuna and this was eventually used to kill Ghatotkacha. At that time, we have the unseemly sight of Krishna dancing around in glee at Ghatotkacha being killed.

In the Mahabharata, because it is nuanced, we never quite know what is good and what is bad, who is good and who is bad. Yes, there are degrees along a continuum. But there are no watertight and neat compartments. The four objectives of human existence are dharma, artha, kama and moksha. Etymologically, dharma is that which upholds. If one goes by the Bhagavad Gita, pursuit of these four are also transient diversions. Because the fundamental objective is to transcend these four, even moksha. Within these four, the Mahabharata is about a conflict of dharma. Dharma has been reduced to *varnashrama* dharma, according to the four classes (*varna*s) and four stages of life (*ashrama*s). However, these are collective interpretations of dharma, in the sense that a

Kshatriya in the *garhasthya* (householder) stage has certain duties. Dharma in the Mahabharata is individual too. Given an identical situation, a Kshatriya in the garhasthya stage might adopt a course of action that is different from that adopted by another Kshatriya in the garhasthya stage, and who is to judge what is wrong and what is right? Bhishma adopted a life of celibacy. So did Arjuna, for a limited period. In that stage of celibacy, both were approached by women who had fallen in love with them. And if those desires were not satisfied, the respective women would face difficulties, even death. Bhishma spurned the advance, but Arjuna accepted it. The conflict over dharma is not only the law versus morality conflict made famous by Krishna and Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita. It pervades the Mahabharata, in terms of a conflict over two different notions of dharma. Having collectively married Droupadi, the Pandavas have agreed that when one of them is closeted with Droupadi, the other four will not intrude. And if there is such an instance of intrusion, they will go into self-exile. Along comes a Brahmana whose cattle have been stolen by thieves. Arjuna's weapons are in the room where Droupadi and Yudhishthira are. Which is the higher dharma? Providing succour to the Brahmana or adhering to the oath? Throughout the Mahabharata, we have such conflicts, with no clear normative indications of what is wrong and what is right, because there are indeed no absolute answers. Depending on one's decisions, one faces the consequences and this brings in the unsolvable riddle of the tension between free will and determinism, the so-called karma concept. The boundaries of philosophy and religion blur.

These conflicts over dharma are easy to identify with. It is easy to empathize with the protagonists, because we face such conflicts every day. That is precisely the reason why the Mahabharata is read even today. And the reason one says every conceivable human emotion figures in the story. Everyone familiar with the Mahabharata has thought about the decisions taken and about the characters. Why was life so unfair to Karna? Why was Krishna partial to the Pandavas? Why didn't he prevent the war? Why was Abhimanyu killed so unfairly? Why did the spirited and dark Droupadi, so unlike the Sita of the Ramayana, have to be humiliated publicly?

It is impossible to pinpoint when and how my interest in the Mahabharata started. As a mere toddler, my maternal grandmother used to tell me stories from *Chandi*, part of the Markandeya Purana. I still vividly recollect pictures from her copy of *Chandi*: Kali licking the demon Raktavija's blood. Much later, in my early teens, at school in Ramakrishna Mission, Narendrapur, I first read the Bhagavad Gita, without understanding much of what I read. The alliteration and poetry in the first chapter was attractive enough for me to learn it by heart. Perhaps the seeds were sown there. In my late teens, I stumbled upon Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay's *Krishna Charitra*, written in

1886. Bankimchandra was not only a famous novelist, he was a brilliant essayist. For a long time, *Krishna Charitra* was not available other than in Bengali. It has now been translated into English, but deserves better dissemination. A little later, when in college, I encountered Buddhadeb Bose's *Mahabharater Katha*. That was another brilliant collection of essays, first serialized in a magazine and then published as a book in 1974. This too was originally in Bengali, but is now available in English. Unlike my sons, my first exposure to the Mahabharata story came not through television serials but comic books. Upendrakishore Raychowdhury's Mahabharata (and Ramayana) for children was staple diet, later supplanted by Rajshekhar Basu's abridged versions of both epics, written for adults. Both were in Bengali. In English, there was Chakravarti Rajagopalachari's abridged translation, still a perennial favourite. Later, Chakravarthi Narasimhan's selective unabridged translation gave a flavour of what the Mahabharata actually contained. In Bengal, the Kashiram Das version of the Mahabharata, written in the seventeenth century, was quite popular. I never found this appealing. But in the late 1970s, I stumbled upon a treasure. Kolkata's famous College Street was a storehouse of old and second-hand books in those days. You never knew what you would discover when browsing. In the nineteenth century, an unabridged translation of the Mahabharata had been done in Bengali under the editorship of Kaliprasanna Singha (1840–70). I picked this up for the princely sum of Rs 5. The year may have been 1979, but Rs 5 was still amazing. This was my first complete reading of the unabridged version of the Mahabharata. This particular copy probably had antiquarian value. The pages would crumble in my hands and I soon replaced my treasured possession with a republished reprint. Not longer after, I acquired the Aryashastra version of the Mahabharata, with both the Sanskrit and the English together. In the early 1980s, I was also exposed to three Marathi writers writing on the Mahabharata. There was Iravati Karve's *Yuganta*. This was available in both English and in Marathi. I read the English one first, followed by the Marathi. The English version isn't an exact translation of the Marathi and the Marathi version is far superior. Then there was Durga Bhagwat's *Vyas Parva*. This was in Marathi and I am not aware of an English translation. Finally, there was Shivaji Sawant's *Mritunjaya*, a kind of autobiography for Karna. This was available both in English and in Marathi.

In the early 1980s, quite by chance, I encountered two shlokas, one from Valmiki's Ramayana, the other from Kalidasa's *Meghadutam*. These were two poets separated by anything between 500 to 1,000 years, the exact period being an uncertain one. The shloka in *Meghadutam* is right towards the beginning, the second shloka to be precise. It is the first day in the month of Ashada. The yaksha has been cursed and has been separated from his beloved. The mountains are covered with clouds. These clouds are like elephants, bent down as if in play. The shloka in the Valmiki Ramayana occurs in Sundara Kanda. Rama now knows that Sita is in Lanka. But the monsoon stands in the

way of the invasion. The clouds are streaked with flags of lightning and garlanded with geese. They are like mountain peaks and are thundering, like elephants fighting. At that time, I did not know that elephants were a standard metaphor for clouds in Sanskrit literature. I found it amazing that two different poets separated by time had thought of elephants. And because the yaksha was pining for his beloved, the elephants were playing. But because Rama was impatient to fight, the elephants were fighting. I resolved that I must read all this in the original. It was a resolution I have never regretted. I think that anyone who has not read *Meghadutam* in Sanskrit has missed out on a thing of beauty that will continue to be a joy for generations to come.

In the early 1980s, Professor Ashok Rudra was a professor of economics in Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan. I used to teach in Presidency College, Kolkata, and we sometimes met. Professor Rudra was a left-wing economist and didn't think much of my economics. I dare say the feeling was reciprocated. By tacit agreement, we never discussed economics. Instead, we discussed Indological subjects. At that point, Professor Rudra used to write essays on such subjects in Bengali. I casually remarked, 'I want to do a statistical test on the frequency with which the five Pandavas used various weapons in the Kurukshetra war.' Most sensible men would have dismissed the thought as crazy. But Professor Rudra wasn't sensible by usual norms of behaviour and he was also a trained statistician. He encouraged me to do the paper, written and published in Bengali, using the Aryashastra edition. Several similar papers followed, written in Bengali. In 1983, I moved to Pune, to the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, a stone's throw away from BORI. *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* (*ABORI*) is one of the most respected journals in Indology. Professor G.B. Palsule was then the editor of *ABORI* and later went on to become Director of BORI. I translated one of the Bengali essays into English and went and met Professor Palsule, hoping to get it published in *ABORI*. To Professor Palsule's eternal credit, he didn't throw the dilettante out. Instead, he said he would get the paper refereed. The referee's substantive criticism was that the paper should have been based on the critical edition, which is how I came to know about it. Eventually, this paper (and a few more) were published in *ABORI*. In 1989, these became a book titled *Essays on the Ramayana and the Mahabharata*, published when the Mahabharata frenzy had reached a peak on television. The book got excellent reviews, but hardly sold. It is now out of print. As an aside, the book was jointly dedicated to Professor Rudra and Professor Palsule, a famous economist and a famous Indologist respectively. Both were flattered. However, when I gave him a copy, Professor Rudra said, 'Thank you very much. But who is Professor Palsule?' And Professor Palsule remarked, 'Thank you very much. But who is Professor Rudra?'

While the research interest in the Mahabharata remained, I got sidetracked into translating. Through the 1990s, there were abridged translations of the Maha Puranas, the Vedas and the eleven major Upanishads. I found that I enjoyed translating from the

Sanskrit to English and since these volumes were well received, perhaps I did do a good job. With Penguin as publisher, I did a translation of the Bhagavad Gita, something I had always wanted to do. *Sarama and Her Children*, a book on attitudes towards dogs in India, also with Penguin, followed. I kept thinking about doing an unabridged translation of the Mahabharata and waited to muster up the courage. That courage now exists, though the task is daunting. With something like two million words and ten volumes expected, the exercise seems open-ended. But why translate the Mahabharata? In 1924, George Mallory, with his fellow climber Andrew Irvine, may or may not have climbed Mount Everest. They were last seen a few hundred metres from the summit, before they died. Mallory was once asked why he wanted to climb Everest and he answered, 'Because it's there.' Taken out of context, there is no better reason for wanting to translate the Mahabharata. There is a steep mountain to climb. And I would not have dared had I not been able to stand of the shoulders of the three intellectual giants who have preceded me—Kisori Mohan Ganguli, Manmatha Nath Dutt and J.A.B. van Buitenen.

Bibek Debroy

In this first volume, we begin with a list of contents and a summary of everything that is in the Mahabharata. Since the Mahabharata as a story was recited at Janamejaya's snake-sacrifice, there is a digression on serpents, Takshaka and the stories of Poushya, Puloma and the Bhrigu lineage. Why were the snakes slaughtered at the snake-sacrifice? That takes one to the story of Garuda and how Astika saved the snakes. After this, one learns how the gods and demons are incarnated on earth and there is an account of the genealogy of the Kouravas and the Pandavas, with the stories of Shakuntala and Yayati. The Kourava and Pandava princes grow up and the enmity between the cousins develops. The Kouravas try to burn the Pandavas by setting fire to the house built of lacquer in which the Pandavas reside and the Pandavas slay the demons Hidimba and Baka. The Pandavas encounter a *gandharva* named Chitraratha and we learn about the enmity between Drona and Drupada. After digressions on Tapati and Vasishtha, Droupadi's wedding takes place and the Pandavas are given a share of the kingdom.

# Section One

## Anukramanika Parva

*This parva has 210 shlokas and only one chapter. It was clearly a later addition and sets out the background for the recital of the story and summarizes the main incidents, not once, but twice.*

1

'Jaya'[1] must be recited after having bowed in obeisance before Narayana and also Nara,[2] the supreme human being, and also the goddess Sarasvati.

The great sages, performers of difficult austerities, were present at the twelve-year sacrifice of Kulapati[3] Shounaka and were comfortably seated in Naimisharanya.[4] Ugrashrava, the son of Lomaharshana and the son of a suta,[5] learned in the Puranas,[6] and also known as Souti, once approached them, bowing in humility.

When he reached the hermitage of Naimisharanya, the hermits who were the inhabitants, surrounded him, wishing to hear his wonderful stories.

Having been respectfully welcomed by those sages, he folded his palms before all those sages and asked them how their ascetic pursuits were progressing.

When all the sages had taken their seats again, Lomaharshana's son respectfully took the seat earmarked for him.

On seeing that he was comfortably seated and noticing that he was rested from his fatigue, one of the sages began the conversation and said: 'O lotus-eyed! O Souti! I am asking you. Tell me the details of where you have come from. Also, where have you spent the time?'

Souti said: 'The great-souled royal sage and lord of earth, Janamejaya, the son of Parikshit,[7] organized a snake-sacrifice. There, in his presence, Vaishampayana recited properly the wonderful and sacred stories composed by Krishna Dvaipayana.[8] After listening to those diverse stories of the Mahabharata, I wandered among several places of pilgrimage and sacred waters. I finally came to the sacred place known as Samantapanchaka, venerated by the twice-born. This is the land where, a long time ago, a war was fought between the Kurus and the Pandavas, and also all the kings of the earth. After that, anxious to see you, I have come before you. O revered sages! You shine like the fire of the sun in this sacred place of sacrifice. In my view, you are like Brahma to me, you who are pure through having performed sacred rites and meditation and you who maintain the fire of sacrifice. O you who are twice-born! [9] You are beyond all cares. What shall I say? Shall I state the sacred stories of the Puranas, the source of

dharma and artha? Shall I speak of the history of kings among men and sages and great souls?'

The sages replied: 'Tell us that ancient story that was told by the supreme sage Dvaipayana, that which was worshipped by the gods and the *brahmarshis*[10] when they heard it—and that which is full of wonderful words and divisions and is the supreme of narratives, with subtle meanings and logic, adorned with the essence of the Vedas.[11] That sacred history of the Bharatas is beautiful in language and meaning, and includes all other works. All the shastras[12] add to it and that sacred composition of great Vyasa has been added to the four Vedas. We wish to hear that holy collection, that drives away fear of sin, just as it was recited at King Janamejaya's sacrifice by Vaishampayana.'

Souti said: 'I bow to the original being Ishana,[13] adored by all and to whom all offerings are made. He is truth and without decay, the manifested and un-manifested *brahman*, eternal. He is both existing and non-existing. He is the existing universe, but is distinct from the existing and the non-existing. I bow before Hari, the lord of all that moves and does not move, the lord of the senses. I bow before the pure and sinless Vishnu, worthy of worship, and he who is good and goodness.

'I will describe to you the holy thoughts of that great sage who is venerated in the entire world, Vyasa, the performer of wonderful deeds. Some poets have already sung this story before. Other poets are teaching this history now. In the future, still others will certainly do this on earth. Throughout the three worlds, this is a great storehouse of knowledge. Those who are twice-born, possess it in its details and compound forms. It is embellished with elegant words and usage human and divine. It is adorned with myriad metres and loved by the learned.

'When this universe was without brightness and without light and everything was enveloped in darkness on all sides, the great egg came into being. This was the inexhaustible seed of all creatures and was created at the beginning of all the eras. It is said that in this divine cause existed the eternal brahman,[14] true and resplendent—wonderful and beyond imagination and perfectly balanced everywhere. This was the subtle un-manifested cause. It was that which exists and that which does not. From this was born the one and only Lord Prajapati, known as Brahma, the preceptor of the gods. He is also known as Sthanu, Manu, Ka and Parameshthin. From him was born Daksha, the son of Prachetas, and Daksha's seven sons, and the twenty-one prajapatis. Him whom all the sages know as the being who cannot be fathomed was also born, as were the vishvadevas, the adityas, the vasus and the ashvins. Yakshas, saddhyas,[15] pishachas, guhyakas and the pitris were born and after that were born the learned, holy and superior brahmarshis. Then were born many *rajarshis*,[16] endowed with every noble quality. The water, heaven, earth, wind, sky and the directions, the years, seasons, months, fortnight, day and night, followed in succession. The world witnessed

everything else that came forth. When the world is immersed in the decay of the era, everything that can be seen, movable and immovable, is again brought together. As the season changes, signs of the season can be seen. Like that, at the beginning of another era, everything is produced again. Without beginning and without end, the wheel of existence rolls on eternally in this world, causing creation and destruction, without beginning and without end.

'To give a brief example of creation, there are 33,333 gods. The sons of the divine Vivasvat were Brihadbhanu, Chakshus, Atma, Vibhavasu, Savita, Richika, Arka, Bhanu, Ashavaha and Ravi. Of these sons, Mahya was the youngest and his son was Devabhrata, also known as Subhraja. Subhraja had three famous sons, named Dashajyoti, Shatajyoti and Sahasrajyoti, and each of them gave birth to many offspring. The great Dashajyoti had ten thousand sons. The self-possessed Shatajyoti had ten times that number and Sahasrajyoti had ten times the number of offspring Shatajyoti had. From them were descended the line of the Kurus, the Yadus and the Bharatas, the lines of Yayati, Ikshvaku and all the rajarshis. Many other lineages and diverse living beings were created and their various places of residence.

'The three mysteries of knowledge—the Vedas, yoga[17] and *vijnana*[18]—were created, as were dharma, artha and kama. The sage saw the various shastras, interspersed with dharma, artha and kama, and the rules of conduct for the world. He saw the ancient histories and all their commentaries and the *shruti*[19] texts too. This book has the signs of all those, everything is here. Having distilled this great knowledge, the sage made a summary of all that, in both abridged and detailed forms, as a storehouse of knowledge for the retention of the wise of this world. Some read Bharata from the story of Manu, others from the story of Astika, still others from the story of Uparichara. Some Brahmanas read the entire text. Learned men display their knowledge of the *samhitas*[20] by commenting on this collection. Some are skilled in explaining it, others in remembering it.

'After penance and austerities, after having classified the eternal Vedas, Satyavati's son composed this holy history. This learned brahmarshi, the son of Parashara, followed pure vows. Requested by his mother and at the request of the wise son of Ganga,[21] Krishna Dvaipayana lawfully became the father of three sons in Vichitravirya's field.[22] These three Kouravas were like three fires. After thus giving birth to Dhritarashtra, Pandu and Vidura, he returned to his hermitage to pursue the wise path of austerities. Until these sons were born, grew up and passed on to the supreme journey,[23] the great sage did not reveal Bharata to the world of men. When he was requested by Janamejaya and thousands of Brahmanas, he taught it to his disciple Vaishampayana, seated in his presence. Seated with his compatriots, it was he (Vaishampayana) who recited Bharata at intervals during the sacrifice, being repeatedly asked to continue when he stopped.

Vyasa has described in detail the great lineage of the Kurus, the virtues of Gandhari, the wisdom of Vidura and the constancy of Kunti. The blessed sage has also described the greatness of Vasudeva,[24] the truthfulness of the Pandavas and the evil conduct of the sons of Dhritarashtra. Without minor narratives, Vyasa originally composed Bharata in 24,000 twenty verses. The learned know this as the real Bharata. Later, he composed a summary in 150 verses, with an index of the chapters, contents and events. Dvaipayana first taught this index to his son Shuka and then to other disciples who had the same qualities. Narada recited it to the gods, Asita-Devala[25] to the ancestors and Shuka to the gandharvas,[26] yakshas and rakshasas.

'Duryodhana is a great tree created out of passion, Karna is its trunk, Shakuni is its branches, Duhshashana is the plentiful fruit and flowers and the mindless Dhritarashtra is its root. Yudhishthira is a great tree created out of righteousness, Arjuna is its trunk, Bhima is its branches, the two sons of Madri[27] are its plentiful fruit and flowers, and Krishna, Brahma and the Brahmanas are the root.

'After having conquered many countries with war and valour, Pandu retired to the forest with the sages, because he was fond of hunting. When out hunting, he brought great misfortune on himself by killing a stag when it was with its mate. Since their birth, Pritha's[28] sons spent their lives there, according to the prescribed norms. In accordance with what is laid down in law, their two mothers[29] conceived sons from Dharma, Vayu, Shakra[30] and the two gods, the Ashvins. They grew up under the care of their two mothers and in the society of holy sages, in sacred groves and forests. Then, on their own, the sages took them to the presence of Dhritarashtra and his sons. They were dressed as *brahmacharis*[31] and students, with sacred tufts in their hair. The sages said, "These students of ours are the sons of Pandu, your sons, brothers and friends." Saying this, the sages left. On seeing the sons of Pandu who had thus been left with them, the Kouravas, the learned among the castes and the townspeople exclaimed loudly with joy. However, some said they were not the sons of Pandu. Others said they were. Others wondered how they could be the sons of Pandu when Pandu had died long ago. However, voices were heard from all directions saying that they were welcome nonetheless. Through great fortune, Pandu's offspring could now be seen. They must be welcomed. Such voices were heard everywhere. When the tumult of the people had died down, an enormous outcry was heard from invisible beings and all the directions echoed with the sound. As Partha[32] and the others entered, there was a shower of fragrant flowers and the sound of conch shells and kettledrums. It was a great wonder. Delighted because of their love for them, the townspeople's loud cries rose up to heaven and increased the Pandavas' fame.

'Without threats from anywhere, the Pandavas lived there, studying the Vedas and

various other shastras. They were respected by all the people. The townspeople were delighted with the purity of Yudhishthira, the strength of Bhima, the valour of Arjuna, the humility of the twins and the submissiveness of Kunti to her elders. The entire world was content with their quality of valour.

'After a few years, in an assembly of kings where the maiden Krishna[33] was to choose her own bridegroom, Arjuna performed a difficult task and won her hand. From that day, he was respected by everyone in the world as a great archer. He became like a sun in the battlefield, difficult to behold. He defeated all the kings and all the main tribes. Thus, the king[34] could now perform the *rajasuya*[35] sacrifice. Through the wise counsel of Krishna and the prowess of Bhima and Arjuna, Yudhishthira killed Jarasandha and the swollen-head king of Chedi[36] and thus obtained the right to perform the rajasuya, rich in provisions and sacrificial offerings and full of merit. Duryodhana came to this sacrifice and saw on all sides the great wealth of the Pandavas—the offerings, precious stones, gold, jewels, cattle, horses, elephants and treasure. On seeing this, his envy made him angry. He fumed when he saw the hall of assembly, like a celestial chariot, built by Maya. Before Vasudeva, he was mocked by Bhima, who said he was of common birth, when he got confused at the architectural deceptions.

'It was reported to Dhritarashtra that while he was enjoying himself with various objects and valuable things, his son had turned pale, yellow and thin. Out of affection for his son, the blind king gave him permission to play the game of dice. When Vasudeva heard this, he became very angry. Though he wasn't pleased, he did nothing to stop the dispute and overlooked the fatal game and other unjust acts, as they increased in importance. In spite of Vidura, Bhishma, Drona and Kripa, the son of Sharadvata, he made the Kshatriyas kill each other in the great war that followed.

'On hearing the news of the Pandava victory and knowing the vows taken by Duryodhana, Karna and Shakuni, Dhritarashtra thought for a while and then told Sanjaya: "O Sanjaya! Listen to all that I am about to say. You will then find that I am not worthy of contempt. You are learned in the sacred texts, intelligent, wise and respected for being wise. My inclinations were not for war, nor do I find pleasure in the destruction of my lineage. I have no special affinity towards my sons compared to the sons of Pandu. My own sons, following the wrong path, were upset with me because I was old and blind. I bore all that, because of my weak state and because of my love for my sons. I was deluded and silly and Duryodhana's folly thrived on that. He saw the wealth and power of the sons of Pandu at the rajasuya sacrifice and was mocked at his awkwardness when he ascended the hall. He couldn't bear this, but was incapable of defeating the Pandavas in the field of battle. Unlike a Kshatriya and incapable of energetically pursuing wealth, with the help of the king of Gandhara, he planned an unjust game of dice. O Souti! Listen to my words and learn all that happened later and all that I came to know. When you hear what I say and learn, you will know that my

wise eyes have the gift of foresight.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that, in the presence of all the kings, Krishna[37] was taken, when the wonderful bow was drawn and pierced, the target fell to the ground.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Subhadra of the Madhu lineage was forcibly carried away by Arjuna and married in Dvaraka and when the two heroes[38] of the Vrishni lineage set out for Indraprastha.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Arjuna had satisfied Agni by giving him the Khandava forest and when he used his divine arrows to check the downpour brought down by the king of the gods.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Yudhishthira had been defeated in the game of dice by Soubala[39] and deprived of his kingdom, though his powerful brothers were still in attendance.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Droupadi, with protectors but as if no protectors existed, was dragged to court at the time of her period, with a single garment on and with tears in her throat.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that the grieving and righteous Pandava brothers left for the forest, suffering out of love for the eldest.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that thousands of *snatakas*[40] and great Brahmanas who lived on alms followed Dharmaraja[41] to the forest.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Arjuna had pacified in combat the god of the gods, Shiva, who appeared before him in the disguise of a hunter, and obtained from him the great weapon Pashupata.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Arjuna, bound by his promise, had gone to heaven and learnt properly from Indra the use of celestial weapons.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Bhima and the other sons of Kunti, accompanied by Vaishravana,[42] had gone to the land that is inaccessible to humans.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that my sons, spurred by Karna's advice, had gone on a cattle-related expedition and been captured by the gandharvas, and then freed by Arjuna.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Dharma had appeared before Dharmaraja[43] in the disguise of a yaksha and posed him questions that were correctly answered.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that when the great-spirited Arjuna lived in the kingdom of Virata, my best had been destroyed by Arjuna on a single chariot.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that the king of Matsya[44] had

with great honour bestowed his daughter Uttara on Arjuna and he had accepted her for his son.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Yudhishthira, defeated, wealth-less, exiled, separated from friends and relatives, had been able to raise seven *akshouhinis*.[45]

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard Narada declare that Krishna and Arjuna were Nara and Narayana and that he had truly seen them thus in the world of Brahma.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Krishna of the Madhu lineage, who had covered the world with one foot,[46] had been engaged on the side of the Pandavas.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Karna and Duryodhana had plotted to revile Keshava,[47] but he had shown himself in many forms.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Pritha[48] had been consoled by Keshava, when she had stood in front of his chariot, weeping in sorrow at his departure.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Vasudeva had become their advisor and Shantanu's son Bhishma and Bharadvaja[49] had pronounced blessings on them.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Karna had told Bhishma that he wouldn't fight if Bhishma fought, and saying this, had gone away.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Vasudeva, Arjuna and the immeasurable Gandiva bow had come together, a threesome of fearful energy.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Arjuna, overcome by lassitude, had sunk down on his chariot, and Krishna had shown him all the worlds within his own body.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Bhishma, the great destroyer of enemies, was killing tens of thousands[50] of charioteers every day, but had not killed a single warrior of note.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Arjuna, having placed Shikhandi in front of him, had vanquished the infinitely courageous Bhishma, unconquered in many battles.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that the old warrior Bhishma, after killing the *somaka*[51] warriors until only a few remained, was lying on a bed of arrows, wounded by an arrow with a multicoloured feathered tip.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Shantanu's son Bhishma was lying there and was thirsty and Arjuna pierced the ground to slake his thirst.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Shukra[52] and Surya[53] united

to bring victory to the sons of Kunti and fierce beasts of prey were always around us.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Drona displayed the paths of many weapons in the course of battle, but failed to kill a single one of the chief Pandavas.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that the great warriors,[54] the *sanshaptakas*,[55] who had been placed so as to kill Arjuna, were all killed by him.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Subhadra's brave son[56] had single-handedly penetrated our secret battle formation, impenetrable to others and guarded by the well-armed son of Bharadvaja[57] himself.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that all our great warriors, unable to defeat Arjuna, combined to surround and kill the boy Abhimanyu and then rejoiced.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that the mindless warriors of Dhritarashtra cheered with delight at killing Abhimanyu and the furious Arjuna took his vow about the king of Sindhu.[58]

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Arjuna had taken a vow to kill the king of Sindhu and kept his vow in the midst of all his enemies.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that on finding the horses of Dhananjaya[59] exhausted, Vasudeva unyoked them in the field of battle, gave them water to drink and then re-yoking them, drove on.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Arjuna, on his chariot, fended off all warriors with his Gandiva bow, when the horses that drew his chariot were indisposed.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Yuyudhana[60] of the Vrishni race threw Drona's army into disorder with the strength of his unassailable elephant and returned to where Krishna and Partha[61] were.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Karna, with Bhima in his power, spared his life with some abusive words and dragged the warrior with the tip of his bow.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Drona, Kritavarma, Kripacharya, Karna, Drona's son[62] and the brave king of Madra[63] allowed the king of Sindhu[64] to be killed in their presence.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that the celestial spear, given by the king of the gods,[65] was diverted by Madhava,[66] to the demon Ghatotkacha, of terrible form.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that in the fight between Karna and Ghatotkacha, the spear that would have killed Savyasachi[67] in battle, was

unleashed by the son of the charioteer.[68]

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Dhrishtadyumna, violating all norms of what was right, killed Drona, while he was alone on his chariot, insensate and bent on dying.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Nakula, the son of Madri, engaged the son of Drona[69] in a chariot duel before all the people and proved himself to be equal in war.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that after Drona's death, Drona's son misused the celestial weapon *narayana*, but failed to kill the Pandavas.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that the exceedingly brave Karna, unconquerable in war, was killed by Arjuna in a fraternal war that was beyond comprehension even to the gods.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that the son of Drona,[70] the brave warrior Duhshasana and the fearsome Kritavarma failed to defeat Dharmaraja Yudhishthira.

'"O Sanjaya! O Bard! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Yudhishthira killed the king of Madra,[71] who always taunted Krishna in battle.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that evil Soubala,[72] the cause of the game of dice and the quarrel, though armed by magic, was killed in battle by the Pandava Sahadeva.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that Duryodhana, weakened in strength, without a chariot, fatigued, and with his pride broken, went to a pond and lay down in its waters.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that the Pandavas, accompanied by Vasudeva, stood at that pond of the Ganga and addressed my quarrelsome son with contempt.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that, in the battle of the clubs, despite displaying various marvellous circuits,[73] he was unjustly killed through the advice of Vasudeva.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that the son of Drona[74] and others committed a horrible and infamous act by killing the Panchalas[75] and the sons of Droupadi while they slept.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that, pursued by Bhimasena and angered, Ashvatthama discharged the greatest of weapons named *aishika*, which killed the unborn in the womb.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that the weapon *brahmashira*, was discharged by Ashvatthama and repelled with another weapon by Arjuna, which he then pacified, but Ashvatthama had to surrender the jewel on his head.

'"O Sanjaya! I had no hope of victory when I heard that the son of Drona[76] killed the unborn in the womb of the daughter of Virata[77] through a great weapon, and that the son of Drona was cursed jointly by Dvaipayana and Keshava.

'"Alas! Woe to Gandhari who has lost her sons, grandsons, friends, fathers, brothers and relatives. The Pandavas have accomplished a difficult feat. They have again gained a kingdom without a rival.

'"Alas! I have heard that only ten people have survived this difficult war, three on our side and seven on the side of the Pandavas. In that fearful war of Kshatriyas, eighteen armies[78] have been slain. I see extended and extreme darkness all around me. Delusion overcomes me. O Suta! Consciousness is leaving me, my mind is delirious."'

Souti said, 'Having uttered these words in greatest sorrow and lamented his fate, Dhritarashtra became unconscious. On recovering, he addressed Sanjaya in these words.

'Dhritarashtra said, "O Sanjaya! Since this has happened, I wish to give up my life immediately. I see not consolation nor profit in being alive any longer."'

Souti said, 'Then the wise son of Gavalgana[79] addressed these words full of meaning to that wretched and lamenting king of the earth.

'Sanjaya said, "From wise Narada and Dvaipayana you have heard of many kings, those who had great enterprise and great strength. They were born in great royal dynasties and possessed great virtues. They knew the use of celestial weapons and were equal to Shakra[80] in energy. Having conquered the earth with righteous conduct and performed sacrifices with appropriate offerings, they obtained fame in this world and then succumbed to the forces of time. Such men were the great warrior Vainya, the brave Srinjaya who won through blessings, Suhotra, Rantideva, Kakshivanta, Oushija, Balhika, Damana, Shaivya, Sharyati, Ajita, Jita, Vishvamitra, the slayer of enemies and Ambarisha, of great strength, Marutta, Manu, Ikshvaku, Gaya, Bharata, Rama, the son of Dasharatha, Shashabindu, Bhagiratha and Yayati of good deeds, to whom the gods themselves sacrificed and who has left the habitable and inhabitable regions of the earth adorned with sacrificial sheds and stakes. In ancient times, when Shaivya was afflicted with the loss of his son, these were the twenty-four kings whose acts were cited by the royal sage Narada. But there were other kings who came and went before, with more power, great warriors, great souls and blessed with all the good qualities. They were Puru, Kuru, Yadu, Shura, Vishvagashva of great endurance, Anena, Yuvanashva, Kakutstha, the brave Raghu, the invincible Vitihotra, Bhava, Shveta, Brihadguru, Ushinara, Shataratha, Kanka, Duliduha, Druma, Dambhodbhava, Para, Vena, Sagara, Sankriti, Nimi, Ajeya, Parashu, Pundra, Shambhu, the pure Devavridha, Devahavya, Supratima, Supratika, Brihadratha, Mahotsaha, Vinitatma, Nala of the *nishadas*,[81] Satyavrata, Shantabhaya, Sumitra, the lord Subala, Janujangha, Anaranya, Arka, Priyabhritya, Shubhavrata, Balabandu, Niramarda, Ketushringa, Brihadbala,

Dhrishtaketu, Brihatketu, Diptaketu, Niramaya, Avikshita, Prabala, Dhurta, Kritabandhu, Dridheshudhi, Mahapurana, Sambhavya, Pratyanga, Parahan and Shruti. These kings and hundreds of others, as many as lotuses, have been heard of. Giving up immense wealth and pleasure, these great, powerful and wise kings attained death, as did your sons. Even those, performers of celestial deeds, great souls who had valour, generosity, truth, purity, pity, magnanimity, faith and simplicity and whose abundance of good qualities and riches have been described for the world in the Puranas by superior poets of great learning, they too went to their death. Your sons were wicked, envious, greedy, driven by passion and evil. Do not mourn for them. O Dhritarashtra! You are knowledgeable in the shastras and characterized by intelligence and wisdom. Those whose understanding follows the norms of the shastras do not succumb to delusion. O king of men! You know the good fortune and misfortune of fate. You know the extreme sentiments you succumbed to in protecting your sons. You should not sorrow for that which was bound to happen. Those who are wise do not feel sorry over fate. Even with the greatest wisdom, that which is ordained will happen. No one can transgress the path that has been laid down. Time brings existence and non-existence, pleasure and pain. Time creates all elements and time destroys all beings. Time burns all subjects and it is time that extinguishes the fire. Time alone is awake when everything is asleep. Time cannot be conquered. Time walks in all elements, pervasive and impartial. Knowing that everything, past, present and future, is created by time, it is not appropriate that you should be consumed by grief."'

Souti said, 'Krishna Dvaipayana has composed a holy Upanishad. The study of Bharata is such a holy act that even if one reads only one line of a shloka, all the reader's sins are destroyed. Here are lauded the performers of pure deeds, the gods, the devarshis, the immaculate brahmarshis, the yakshas and the great *naga*s. The eternal Lord Vasudeva has been lauded here. It is he who is truth, immortality, purity and holy. In it is described the eternal supreme brahman, who is the constant everlasting light and whose divine action is described by the learned. He is the source of the existing and the non-existing, the principle of extension and withdrawal. In it has been described the supreme spirit who assumes the attributes of the five elements[82] and three qualities[83] and to whom words like un-manifest cannot be applied. And also those who are free, through the powers of meditation and yoga, perceive established in themselves like reflections in a mirror. He who is always faithful and always follows the path of righteousness, such a man is freed from all sin on reading this chapter. The believer who always hears this introductory chapter of Bharata from the beginning never suffers from difficulties. He who repeatedly utters any part of the introductory chapter in the morning or evening is freed from all sins accumulated during the day or night. In the body of Bharata, this chapter is like truth and ambrosia—like butter among curds and Brahmanas among bipeds, like the ocean is the best of the lakes and the cow is the best

of the quadrupeds. Just as these are the best, so it is said is Bharata. He who makes a Brahmana listen to one verse of a shloka at a funeral ceremony, his offerings of food and drink to his ancestors become inexhaustible. The Vedas should be supported with itihasa[84] and the Puranas. But the Vedas are afraid of those with little learning,[85] lest that knowledge be hurt. However, if a learned man recites this Veda of Krishna's,[86] he will gain. Without a doubt, the sin of killing an embryo is also destroyed. I think that a pure man who has read this chapter reverently at every change of the moon has read the entire Bharata. The man who reverently listens every day to these sacred verses, it is said he attains a long life, fame and goes to heaven. In ancient times, the gods and the sages came together and on one side of a scale, they placed the four Vedas, with Bharata on the other side. In greatness and in weight, Bharata was heavier. Because of its superiority in substance and content, it came to be known as Mahabharata and he who knows this true meaning is freed from all sins. Asceticism is not a sin, studying is not a sin, the natural rules of the Vedas are not sins and exertion to acquire wealth is not a sin. These become sins when they are abused.'

# Section Two

## Parvasamgraha Parva

*This parva has 243 shlokas and one chapter. It too was clearly a later addition. It gives two listings of the Mahabharata in the eighteen-parva and the 100-parva classifications. There is also a very brief summary of the highlights of the story.*

2

The sages said, 'O son of a suta! We wish to hear from you all about the place Samantapanchaka,[1] described as it really is.'

Souti said, 'O Brahmanas! As per your wishes, listen to the blessed words about Samantapanchaka as I tell them. For listening to these accounts, you are the best of men. At the juncture of *treta* and *dvapara*,[2] angered at sins committed, the greatest of those who ever bore arms, Rama,[3] repeatedly decimated the world of all Kshatriyas. Having destroyed all Kshatriyas through his own prowess, lustrous like fire, he created five lakes of blood in Samantapanchaka. We have heard that, beyond his senses with anger, he stood in the bloody waters of those lakes and rendered bloody offerings to his ancestors. Then Richika[4] and his other ancestors appeared before this bull among Brahmanas and said, "Calm down, refrain, be pacified." From that day, the region in the neighbourhood of those five bloody lakes has become famous as the holy land of Samantapanchaka. The wise men have said that every place should have a name that signifies something that made the place famous. At the end of dvapara and the beginning of kali, a great battle was fought between the armies of the Kurus and the Pandavas at this holy Samantapanchaka. In that holy land, free from any bad qualities of the earth, eighteen akshouhinis of soldiers eagerly assembled for battle. O Brahmanas! Thus it was that the name of the region came about. I have described to you that beautiful and holy place. O best of Brahmanas! I have told you everything about this place, a region famous in the three worlds.'

The sages said, 'O son of a suta! We wish to hear everything about the akshouhini that you mentioned to us. You know everything. Tell us exactly the size of an akshouhini, with foot soldiers, horses, chariots and elephants.'

Souti said, 'One chariot, one elephant, five foot soldiers and three horses make up a *patti*. Three pattis are known as a *senamukha* and three senamukhas make up a *gulma*. Three gulmas are named a *gana* and three ganas a *vahini*. The wise know that three vahinis collectively form a *pritana*. Three pritanas make a *chamu*, three chamus an *anikini* and the wise say that ten times an anikini is known as an akshouhini. O best of

Brahmanas! Those who know arithmetic have calculated that there are 21,870 chariots in an akshouhini and the number of elephants is the same. Know that the number of foot soldiers is 109,350 and the number of horses is 65,610. O best of Brahmanas! I have described to you in detail that which those who are familiar with numbers call an akshouhini. O best of Brahmanas! The eighteen akshouhinis of the Kurus and the Pandavas were made up according to these numbers and the cause destroyed them all. Time brought them together in this region and making the Kouravas the cause, destroyed them all. Bhishma, skilled in the best weapons, fought for ten days. Drona defended the Kuru army for five days. Karna, the decimator of enemy soldiers, fought for two days, Shalya for half a day and the duel of the clubs for also that duration. At the end of that day, the son of Drona,[5] Hardikya[6] and Goutama[7] killed Yudhishthira's soldiers when they were sleeping unsuspectingly. I will tell you in detail the story that was narrated at the sacrifice of Shounaka, the Bharata story, beginning with the story of Poulama, which contains wonderful meanings, verses and accounts and is adorned in many ways. It is accepted by the wise the way men who desire final release accept renunciation, as the *atman*[8] is among objects to be known and life among things that are dear. It is the chief among all histories and the best among all sacred texts. This supreme of histories incorporates the supreme of intelligence and vowels, consonants and words, vulgate and learned. Hear the outline of different parvas of Bharata history, with subtle meanings and wondrous lines.

'The first is called Anukramanika (1);[9] the second Parvasangraha (2); then come Poushya (3), Poulama (4), Astika (5) and the descent of the first generation (6); then come the parvas composed by the gods—Sambhava (7), Jatugriha Daha (8),[10] Hidimba (9); then Baka Vadha[11] (10) and then Chaitraratha (11); then the parva known as svayamvara of the divine Panchali (12);[12] then, after defeating rivals in accordance with the dharma of Kshatriyas (13), Vaivahika (14),[13] Viduragamana[14] and Rajya-labha (15);[15] then Arjuna Vanavasa (16),[16] Subhadra Harana (17)[17] and Harana Harika (18); then Khandava Daha (19),[18] where Maya is met; after that, it is known as Sabha Parva (20)[19] and after that, Mantra Parva (21);[20] then Jarasandha Vadha (22)[21] and Digvijaya (23)[22] and after that comes the parva known as Rajasuya (24);[23] then Arghabhirana (25),[24] Shishupala Vadha (26)[25] and then Dyuta (27);[26] and then known as the Anudyuta (28);[27] then the parva known as Aranyaka (29)[28] and Kirmira Vadha (30);[29] then the parva known as Kairata (31), which features the bout between Ishvara[30] and Arjuna; then the parva known as Indraloka Abhigamana (32);[31] then the wise king of Kuru's pilgrimage in Tirthayatra (33); then Jatasura Vadha (34)[32] and

Yaksha Yuddha (35);[33] and the one after that is known as Ajagara (36);[34] then the parva known as Markandeya Samasya (37);[35] and then the parva that has the dialogue between Droupadi and Satyabhama (38); then the parvas known as Ghoshayatra (39),[36] Mrigasvapna (40)[37]and after that the story known as the measurement of rice (41); then Droupadi Harana (42)[38] by Saindhava[39] from the forest; then comes the parva known as Kundala Harana (43),[40] then Araneya (44)[41] and after that the parva known as Virata (45);[42] then the parva known as Kichaka Vadha (46);[43] then the parva known as Gograhana (47);[44] then the parva that tells of the wedding between Abhimanyu and the daughter of the king of Virata (48); the next parva is known as Udyoga (49)[45] and after that the parva is known as Sanjaya Yana (50);[46] the next parva, concerning the worries of Dhritarashtra, is known as Prajagara (51);[47] then Sanatsujata Parva (52) with secret spiritual philosophy; then Yanasandhi (53)[48] and the arrival of Bhagavana (54);[49] then it is known comes the quarrel of the great Karna (55) and Niryanan Parva (56),[50] where the Kuru and Pandava armies march to battle; then comes the parva that describes the numbers of warriors and chariots (57), and the arrival of the intolerance-inspiring messenger Uluka (58); then the parva that tells the story of Amba (59); then the wonder-inspiring parva that tells of the anointment of Bhishma (60); then comes the parva that describes the creation of Jambu (61)[51]and Bhumi Parva (62), which gives an account of the expanse of the continents; then Bhagavad-gita Parva (63); then the parva describing the killing of Bhishma (64); then the anointment of Drona (65) and then the parva with the death of the sanshaptakas (66); then Abhimanyu Vadha (67)[52] Parva; then Pratijna Parva (68);[53] then Jayadratha Vadha Parva (69);[54] then Ghatotkacha Vadha Parva (70);[55] then the account of the slaying of Drona (71) that makes one's hair stand up; after that the parva that is named after the release of the narayana weapon (72); then it is known as Karna Parva (73);[56] after that it is known as Shalya Parva (74);[57] then the parva that has the entering of the lake (75) and after that Gada Yuddha Parva (76);[58] then the parva that describes the river Sarasvati and places of pilgrimage and dynasties (77) and then Souptika (78);[59] then the dreadful Aishika Parva (79) [60] and then Jalapradana (80);[61] then Stri Parva (81);[62] then it is known as Shraddha Parva (82) [63] with funeral rites for the dead Kuru warriors; then the coronation of the wise Dharmaraja (83); then the subjugation of Charvaka (84) who was a demon who appeared in the garb of a Brahmana; then the parva that describes the dividing up of the houses (85); then Shanti Parva (86)[64] where the duties of kings are described; then the parva where duties during contingencies are described (87); then that which describes the way to salvation (88); then Anushasana

Parva (89) that describes disciplines and the parva that describes the wise Bhishma's ascent to heaven (90); next is Ashvamedha Parva (91) that destroys all sins and Anugita Parva (92) that concerns spiritual attainment; next come dwelling in the hermitage (93), meeting the sons (94) and the arrival of Narada (95); then the terrible Moushala Parva (96),[65] then Mahaprasthanika Parva (97),[66] and then Svargarohanika Parva (98);[67] then follows the Purana known as Harivamsha (99)[68] that is an appendix; and finally comes the great Bhavishya Parva (100), [69] which is also an appendix.

'These one hundred parvas were recited in full by the great Vyasa. Later, in the Naimisha forest, Lomaharshana, the son of a suta, recited them exactly again, having classified them into eighteen parvas. The gist of Bharata is given there as a summary of this collection of parvas.

'In Pousha Parva, the greatness of Utanka is described. In Poulama Parva, the extent of the lineage of Bhrigu is described; in Astika, the birth of all the snakes and Garuda, the churning of the ocean and the birth of Uchchaihshrava.[70] Then is recounted the story of the great-souled Bharatas, as described at the snake-sacrifice of King Parikshit.[71] In Sambhava Parva is described the birth of various kings, Brahmanas and the sage Dvaipayana, the partial incarnations of the gods are recounted, the births of the *daityas*, *danavas*[72] and powerful yakshas, and of nagas,[73] snakes, gandharvas and birds and all the other diverse living creatures; the births of the great Vasus from the Bhagirathi and in the house of Shantanu and their subsequent ascent to heaven and the birth of Bhishma from their energy is described, his renunciation of the kingdom, his adoption of brahmacharya, his adherence to the vow, his protection of Chitrangada and after Chitrangada's death, his protection of his younger brother,[74] and his subsequent placing of Vichitravirya on the throne. The birth of Dharma among men, as a result of Animandavya's curse, and the births of Dhritarashtra and Pandu, thanks to Krishna Dvaipayana's boon, and also that of the Pandavas, is described. The conspiracy of Duryodhana on the journey to Varanavata, the digging of a tunnel on Vidura's advice and the meeting between the Pandavas and the terrible-looking Hidimba in the forest and the birth of Ghatotkacha are next described. Then follow the disguised existence of the Pandavas in the house of the Brahmana, the killing of Vaka and the amazement of the townspeople. Then, after defeating Angaraparna on the banks of the Ganga, Arjuna, together with his brothers, went to Panchala. Then follow the supreme accounts of Tapati, Vasishtha and Ourva, the wondrous story of the five Indras, Drupada's sorrow that his daughter should have five husbands and the account of Droupadi's divinely arranged marriage. Vidura's arrival and meeting with Keshava, the life in Khandavaprastha and the rule over half the kingdom and Narada's command to Droupadi to follow separate hours, where the story of Sunda and Upasunda is told and Partha's[75] departure to the forest and his meeting with Ulupi on the way are then

described. Next there is the description of the birth of Babhruvahana, the visit to many sacred places of pilgrimage, Arjuna's abduction of Subhadra with Vasudeva's permission in the chariot that goes everywhere at the will of the rider and on the arrival of Krishna, the son of Devaki, the burning of Khandava forest and their receiving of the *chakra* and the bow. The birth in Subhadra's womb of the supreme Abhimanyu, the saving of Maya's life from the fire and the saving of the life of the serpent and the sage Mandapala's giving birth to a son in the womb of a *sharanga* bird[76]—all this and other matters are found in the long Adi Parva, which is the first. Vyasa, of great energy, divided this into 218 chapters.[77] The great one had 7984 shlokas in the text.

'The second is known as Sabha Parva,[78] with extensive accounts. It describes the building of the assembly hall by the Pandavas and their meeting with their servants, the description of the assembly halls of the guardians of the world by Narada who knows the celestial worlds, the beginning of the royal sacrifice, the killing of Jarasandha, the freeing by Krishna of the kings kept imprisoned in Girivraja,[79] the killing of Shishupala at the royal sacrifice when there was a dispute about offerings, Duryodhana's misery and jealousy at the magnificence of the sacrifice, Bhima's taunting of Duryodhana in the assembly hall, as a consequence of which he plotted a game of dice in which the crafty Shakuni defeated the son of Dharma,[80] Droupadi's immersion and deliverance like a boat in the ocean of gambling, after which, witnessing the deliverance, King Duryodhana challenged the Pandavas to another game of dice. The sage named all this Sabha Parva, with seventy-two chapters and 2511 shlokas.

'The great Aranyaka Parva,[81] the third parva, follows. The wise son of Dharma is followed by the townspeople. All the Vrishnis and Panchalas arrive, the slaying of Soubha and Kirmira is described and Arjuna's, whose energy was boundless, wanderings in search of weapons, his duel with Mahadeva who was in the form of a hunter, his ascent to heaven and his sighting of the guardians of the world. Also described is the grieving Yudhishthira, who was tormented over his vices, meeting with the great sage Brihadashva who had knowledge of the atman, the righteous but pitiful tale of Nala is there, the equanimity of Damayanti and Nala's succumbing to vice, the bringing of the news of Arjuna being in heaven by Lomasha to the great-souled Pandavas who were then forest-dwellers. Then follows the pilgrimages of the great-souled Pandavas, the slaying of Jatasura, Bhimasena's journey to Gandhamadana at Droupadi's request, where he transgressed a lotus pond in search of a *mandara* flower[82] and had a great fight with the rakshasas and yakshas led by Manimana. There is the story of Agastya and his swallowing of Vatapi and his sleeping with Lopamudra to beget a son, then the account of the hawk and the pigeon, where Indra, Agni and Dharma test King Shibi, the description of Rishyashringa who was celibate from boyhood and the description of Rama, son of Jamadagni, of unbounded energy, where the slaying of Kartyavirya and

the Haihayas is told.[83] There is the story of Sukanya, where sage Chyavana of the Bhargava clan allowed the Ashvins to drink *soma*[84] at Sharyati's sacrifice and obtained everlasting youth as a result. There is the account of Jantu, where King Somaka sacrificed his son to obtain more sons and obtained one hundred sons, the story of Ashtavakra, where the sage defeated Bandin in a debate and won back his father who had been immersed in the ocean. Having obtained divine weapons for his elder brother, Savyasachi[85] battled the Nivatakavachas of Hiranyapura. Partha[86] then returned to his brothers in Gandhamadana. In the cattle expedition, Kiriti[87] fought a battle with the gandharvas. The Pandavas then returned to the lake named Dvaityavana, Droupadi was abducted from the hermitage by Jayadratha and Bhima, whose speed equalled that of the wind, pursued him. Then there is the meeting with Markandeya and several stories, Krishna's meeting and conversation with Satya, the story of the measure of rice and that of Indradyumna and the accounts of Savitri, Ouddalaka and Vainya, the story of the Ramayana recounted at great length, the theft of Karna's earrings by Purandara,[88] the account of the wood kindlings where Dharma teaches his son and where the Pandavas, after obtaining a boon, leave for the west. This is known as Aranyaka Parva, the third parva, where the great sage had 269 chapters[89] and 11,664 shlokas.

'Then occurs the extensive Virata Parva. It describes how the Pandavas arrived at the city of Virata, saw a large *shami* tree[90] in a cremation ground and hid their weapons in it. Then is described their entry into the city and their living there in disguise and the slaying of the evil Kichaka by Vrikodara.[91] The Kouravas were defeated by Arjuna when the cattle were stolen and Virata's bovine wealth was freed by the Pandavas. Virata gave his daughter Uttara to Kiriti[92] for Abhimanyu, the son of Subhadra and the slayer of enemies. I have described the contents of the fourth large Virata Parva. The great sage composed this parva in sixty-seven chapters and 2050 shlokas.

'After that, listen to the contents of the fifth Udyoga Parva. When the Pandavas were dwelling in Upaplavya, both Duryodhana and Arjuna, desirous of battle, went to Vasudeva and sought his help. Then the extremely wise Krishna said, "O bulls among men! On one side, there is an akshouhini of my soldiers and, on the other, I as a non-combatant counsellor. Which shall I give you?" Not realizing his interests, the foolish Duryodhana asked for the soldiers and Arjuna asked for Krishna as a non-combatant counsellor. Then the mighty king Dhritarashtra sent Sanjaya as a messenger to the Pandavas to ask for peace. Hearing that the Pandavas had Vasudeva in front of them, Dhritarashtra suffered from insomnia and worry and Vidura's many and diverse words of advice to the wise king Dhritarashtra are described and the supreme spiritual doctrine of Sanatsujata told to the sorrowing and anguished king. Next morning, in front of the king, in court, Sanjaya spoke of the union between Vasudeva and Arjuna. It was then

that the great Krishna, moved by pity and desirous of bringing peace, himself went to Hastinapura to find peace and Krishna's proposal for peace was rebuffed by King Duryodhana, though this was in the interest of both parties. Then, hearing the evil counsel of Karna, Duryodhana and others, Krishna displayed to the kings his powers of yoga. Then, Krishna took Karna on his chariot and gave him good advice about options, but intoxicated with arrogance, Karna refused. Then follows the marching out of Hastinapura of chariots, horses, infantry and elephants and the recounting of their numbers. On the day before the great battle, the prince[93] sent the cruel-tongued Uluka as a messenger to the Pandavas. Then is related the numbers of charioteers and great charioteers and the story of Amba. These are the many accounts in the fifth parva of Bharata, titled Udyoga Parva and with incidents of war and peace. The great sage Vyasa, of vast wisdom, composed this in 186 chapters[94] and 6696 shlokas.

'Then is told the wonderful Bhishma Parva, where Sanjaya recounted the creation of the region known as Jambu. Thereafter is narrated the fierce and terrible battle that raged for ten days and the depression of Yudhishthira's army. The supremely wise Vasudeva dispelled there[95] Partha's[96] lassitude born out of delusion, by invoking the teachings of salvation. Also is narrated how the great archer Partha placed Shikhandi in front of him in the war and wounded Bhishma with his sharp arrows and felled him from the chariot. This sixth great parva of the Bharata is Bhishma Parva and was composed by Vyasa, learned in the Vedas, in 117 chapters and 5884 shlokas.

'Then follows the wonderful Drona Parva with many accounts, where Partha had to retreat before the sanshaptakas in battle and Kiriti[97] vanquished King Bhagadatta, equal to Shakra in war, and his elephant Supratika. There is described the slaying, by many great warriors led by Jayadratha, of the brave Abhimanyu, still a boy and not yet a major. Angered at Abhimanyu's death, Partha killed King Jayadratha and seven akshouhinis of soldiers in battle and killed in war the remaining sanshaptakas. In Drona Parva is recounted the deaths of brave Alambusha, Shrutayus, Jalasandha, Soumadatti,[98] Virata, the great warrior Drupada and Ghatotkacha and others. When Drona was downed in battle, unforgiving, Ashvatthama unleashed the awful narayana weapon. This is the detailed seventh parva of Bharata, Drona Parva, where many rulers of the world met their death, warriors and bulls among men mentioned earlier. The sage, the son of Parashara[99] and master of great knowledge, composed this in 170 chapters[100] and 8909 shlokas.

'Thereafter follows the most wonderful Karna Parva, where the appointment of the wise king of Madra[101] as charioteer is described. The old story of the destruction of Tripura is recounted. Then is narrated, at the time of marching out, the strong words exchanged between Karna and Shalya and the account of the swan and the crow, with an insulting moral. There is described the anger of Yudhishthira and Kiriti towards each

other and Partha's slaying of the great warrior Karna in a duel of chariots. Those who know the Bharata call this parva the eighth parva. Karna Parva has sixty-nine chapters and 4900 shlokas.

'The next parva is the wonderful Shalya Parva. After the deaths of the chief warriors, the king of Madra became the commander of the army. In different parts of Shalya Parva is described the deaths of the chief warriors of the Kuru army in circular chariot duels, Shalya's death at the hands of the great-souled Dharmaraja, the furious battle of the clubs is described here and the holy pilgrimage of the Sarasvati River. This wonderful parva with diverse meanings is known by those good at numbers as one with fifty-nine chapters[102] and 3220 shlokas, composed by the great sage who wished to spread the fame of the Kuru lineage.

'I shall now describe to you the terrible Souptika Parva. Once the sons of Pritha[103] had withdrawn, the warriors Kritavarma, Kripa and the son of Drona[104] came to the field of battle in the evening and saw the intolerant King Duryodhana lying on the ground, his thighs broken and his body covered with blood. Firm in his anger, the great warrior, the son of Drona, vowed that he would not take off his armour without killing all the Panchalas led by Dhrishtadyumna and the Pandavas and their allies. Protected by Krishna's strength, the five sons of Pritha and Satyaki,[105] the great wielder of the bow, escaped. Everyone else died. Those bulls among men, led by the son of Drona, killed the Panchalas and their families as they slept peacefully in the night. Grief-stricken because of her sons, and mourning the deaths of her father and brother, Droupadi sat before her husbands, resolving to die of fasting. Moved by Droupadi's words, Bhima, the performer of great deeds, was angered and ran after the son of his preceptor, the son of Bharadvaja.[106] Driven by destiny and out of fear of Bhimasena, the son of Drona unleashed the celestial weapon, urging it to destroy the Pandavas. Krishna neutralized the words and said that would not be, and Phalguna[107] neutralized the weapon with one of his own. Dvaipayana cursed the son of Drona, and he too cursed Dvaipayana. After the funerals of all the kings were performed with offerings of water, there follows the acknowledgement by Pritha[108] of the secret story of how Karna was born from her. The raconteurs know this as the tenth parva, Souptika Parva, composed by the great soul, the sage of unlimited intelligence in eighteen chapters and 870 shlokas.

'After that is told the pitiful Stri Parva. There is recounted the pitiful lamentations of the wives of the heroes and Gandhari and Dhritarashtra's wrath and fainting. They saw the Kshatriya warriors lying on the field of battle, unable to escape destiny—dead sons, brothers and fathers. There the extremely wise king, chief among those who show righteous conduct, burnt the dead bodies of the kings according to prescribed rites. This is known as the great and pitiful eleventh parva. There are twenty-seven chapters in it and seventy-five shlokas are counted. The great-souled author composed the story of

Bharata so as to move the hearts and bring tears to the eyes of good people.

'After that follows the twelfth Shanti Parva, which increases the understanding. There is related Dharmaraja Yudhishthira's despondency at having killed his fathers, brothers, sons, maternal uncles and relations by marriage. On the bed of arrows[109] is related duties and laws that kings who desire to have knowledge should study. Also recounted are norms during emergencies and rules of time and cause. The wonderful path to salvation is described in great detail and a person who understands these attains supreme knowledge. This is known as the twelfth parva, loved by the wise and this parva has 339 chapters[110] and 14,525 shlokas, filled with the fruit of meditation.

'Then follows the excellent Anushasana Parva. There, Yudhishthira, king of the Kurus, was composed after learning about righteous conduct from Bhishma, son of Bhagirathi. It describes the rules of dharma and artha in great detail, the different rules of donation and their fruits, the different merits of charity depending on persons to whom charity is given, the rules of living, the rites of individual conduct and the unmatched supremacy of truth. All these diverse and supreme accounts are recounted in Anushasana Parva and it also describes Bhishma's ascent to heaven. This is the thirteenth parva, describing the certainty of righteous conduct. It has 146 chapters[111] and 6700 shlokas.

'After that is the fourteenth, Ashvamedhika Parva. There is related the excellent story of Samvarta and Marutta, the discovery of the golden treasures,[112] then the birth of Parikshit, who was burnt almost dead by the weapon and revived by Krishna again, the Pandava's[113] journey with the sacrificial horse that had been set loose, his combats with angry princes, Dhananjaya's encounter with Chitrangada's son,[114] his great danger in the battle with Babhruvahana and the story of the mongoose in the great horse-sacrifice. This extremely wonderful parva is known as Ashvamedhika Parva and he who knew the truth composed it in 133 chapters[115] and 3320 shlokas.

'Then follows the fifteenth Ashramavasika Parva. In this, abdicating the kingdom, King Dhritarashtra, accompanied by Gandhari and Vidura, retire to the forest. On seeing this, the virtuous Pritha,[116] who always served her superiors, left the kingdom of her sons and followed the old couple. As a result of the blessings of the sage Krishna,[117] the king saw an incomparable sight. He saw his dead sons, grandsons and other kings, who had gone to the other world, return. On seeing this, the old king discarded his sorrow and obtained with his wife the greatest fruits of his righteous deeds. Having resorted to righteous conduct all his life, Vidura also attained the supreme state. So did the learned and wise adviser Sanjaya, son of Gavalgana. Dharmaraja Yudhishthira met Narada and learnt from Narada about the destruction of the Vrishni lineage. This is the wonderful Ashramavasika Parva. He who knew the truth composed it in forty-two chapters[118] and 1506 shlokas.

‘Then is told the terrible Mousala Parva.[119] This tells the story of how those tigers among men,[120] scars of weapons on their bodies, on account of the Brahmana’s staff, were drunk and deprived of their senses. On the shores of the salty ocean, with *eraka* grass[121] that became like thunder in their hands, they killed one another, driven by destiny. There is told that Rama[122] and Keshava,[123] after destroying their race, themselves succumbed to the great all-consuming time. Then is described how Arjuna, bull among men, journeyed to Dvaravati, and seeing it bereft of the Vrishnis, succumbs to great sorrow and affliction. Having performed the funeral rites for his brave maternal uncle Vasudeva,[124] he saw the warriors of the Yadu race lying dead where they had been drinking. He then performed the funeral ceremonies over the bodies of the great Vasudeva[125] and Rama[126] and the chief among those of the Vrishni lineage. Then is described the journey from Dvaravati with the aged and the children and the sufferings, with the defeat of the gandiva bow. He witnessed the inefficacy of his celestial weapons and the failure to prevent the destruction of the Yadava women. He was despondent on seeing this, and on Vyasa’s advice, went to Dharmaraja and asked for permission to become an ascetic. All this is described in the sixteenth Mousala Parva in eight chapters and 300 shlokas.

‘Then follows the seventeenth Mahaprasthanika Parva. There, the Pandavas, bulls among men, accompanied by the divine Droupadi, gave up their kingdom and left for their great journey. He who knew the truth composed it in three chapters and 120 shlokas.

‘That which comes next is called Svargarohana Parva, full of celestial matters. Replete with the fruits of meditation, it has five chapters and 200 shlokas.

‘These are the contents of the eighteen parvas. The appendices are known as Hari Vamsha[127] and Bhavishya.[128] Thus the entire contents of Bharata are described in the chapter known as Parva Sangraha. Eighteen akshouhinis of soldiers came together to fight and the battle raged for eighteen days.

‘A twice-born who is learned in the Vedas, the *angas*[129] and the Upanishads, but does not know this account, cannot be said to have any learning at all. Having heard this account, so worthy of being heard, no other account will seem pleasing, like the harsh cawing of crows sounds to one who has heard the cuckoo sing. Like the three worlds have evolved from the five elements,[130] the inspirations of all poets flow from this supreme history. O Brahmanas! Just as the four kinds of beings[131] are derived from the sky, all the Puranas[132] draw upon this account. Like the senses are dependent on all the varied workings of the mind, all action and all qualities are dependent on this account. There is no tale on earth that is not based on this account, just as it is impossible for the body to be alive without food. Like servants who wish to advance always live off high-

born masters, all great poets make a living off this account. The Bharata flowed from the lips of Dvaipayana[133] and is immeasurable, sacred, purifying, salvation and the dispeller of sin. He who hears it as it is being recited has no need to bathe in the waters of Pushkara.[134] Just as the wide ocean can easily be crossed by men who possess boats, this section known as Parvasamgraha, helps understand the supreme and great account that is full of deep meaning.'

# Section Three

## Poushya Parva

*This parva has 195 shlokas and one chapter. It is the story of Poushya. After the first two sections, which are really summaries and no more, Section 3 is where the main story of the Mahabharata should begin. But not only is this section mostly in prose, unlike the rest of the Mahabharata, it has little to do with the main story, since it has all kinds of incidents that don't quite belong. All this section does is set up the snake-sacrifice.*

3

Suta said, 'Janamejaya, the son of Parikshit, attended a long sacrifice in Kurukshetra with his brothers. His three brothers were Shrutasena, Ugrasena and Bhimasena. As they sat at the sacrifice, a dog[1] came there. Being beaten by Janamejaya's brothers, the weeping dog went to his mother. On seeing him cry, the mother asked, "Why are you yelping? Who has beaten you?" On hearing this, he told his mother, "I have been beaten by Janamejaya's brothers." Then the mother said, "You must have committed some wrong that you were beaten." He replied, "I did not commit any wrong. I did not lick the sacrificial ghee. I did not even look at it." On hearing this, his mother Sarama felt sorry for the misery of her son and went to the place where Janamejaya and his brothers were attending the long sacrifice.

'She angrily addressed Janamejaya. "My son committed no wrong. He did not lick your sacrificial ghee. He did not even look at it. Why did you then beat him? Since you beat my son who committed no wrong, evil will befall you when you least expect it." On hearing these words of Sarama, dog of the gods, Janamejaya was saddened and miserable.

'Once the sacrifice was over, he returned to Hastinapura and took great effort to find a priest who could counteract the effect of the curse and pacify the effects of his sin. One day, Janamejaya, the son of Parikshit, went out on a hunt and saw a hermitage in a lonely part of his kingdom. A rishi named Shrutashrava lived there and he had a beloved son named Somashrava. Desiring to make the son his priest, Janamejaya, the son of Parikshit, saluted the rishi and said, "O Bhagavan![2] Please allow your son to be my priest." Thus addressed by Janamejaya, the sage replied, "O Janamejaya! My son is a great ascetic and is endowed with learning. But he was born to me in the womb of a snake that had swallowed my semen. He can absolve you from all sins except those committed against Mahadeva. However, he has a secret vow. If a Brahmana asks for anything from him, he always gives it away. If you can accept that, take him with you." Thus addressed, Janamejaya replied, "O Bhagavan! It shall be as you say." He then

accepted him[3] as his priest and returned.

'Janamejaya then told his brothers, "I have accepted this person as my teacher. Without questioning, you must always do what he asks you." The brothers did what they were asked. Giving these instructions to his brothers, he marched against the kingdom of Takshashila and brought it under his control.

'At that time, there was a rishi named Ayoda-Dhoumya. He had three disciples named Upamanyu, Aruni and Veda. One day, the sage asked the disciple Aruni, from the land of Panchala, to go and stop a breach in the dike. On his preceptor's instruction, Aruni of Panchala went there, but could not stop the breach. He was sorry at this, but then found a way and said, "This is what I will do." He entered the breach and lay himself down there and the flow of water stopped. After some time, the preceptor Ayoda-Dhoumya asked his other disciples where Aruni of Panchala was. They replied, "O Bhagavan! He has been sent by you to stop the breach in the dike." Thus told, he said to his disciples, "Let us all go to where he is." Having gone there, he cried out in these words, "O Aruni of Panchala! Where are you? Come here, my son." Hearing his preceptor's voice, Aruni rose from the breach in the dike, stood before his preceptor and said, "I was in the breach in the dike to stop the flow of water that could not be stopped in any other way. It is only when I heard your revered words that I suddenly came to you and allowed the breach again. O Bhagavan! I salute you. Please tell me what your instructions are now." Thus addressed, the preceptor replied, "Since you have opened the flow of waters by standing up from the breach in the dike, you will henceforth be known as Uddalaka." The preceptor also blessed him. "Since you have obeyed my instructions, you will obtain good fortune. All the Vedas will shine in you and also all the *dharmashastras*." Hearing these words of his preceptor, Aruni went to the land where he wished to go.

'Ayoda-Dhoumya had another disciple named Upamanyu. To him the preceptor said, "Go my son and look after my cows." As instructed by his preceptor, he went and looked after the cows. After looking after the cows during the day, he returned to his preceptor's house in the evening, stood before him and respectfully saluted him. On seeing him in the best of health, his preceptor asked, "Upamanyu, my son! How do you support yourself? You are very fat." He replied to his preceptor, "I support myself by begging." The preceptor replied, "You should not use alms you receive from begging without first offering them to me." As instructed, he looked after the cows again. After looking after them, he returned before his preceptor and saluted him again. The preceptor, on seeing him as fat as before, said, "Upamanyu, my child! I take all your alms away from you. How do you support yourself now?" Being thus asked, he told his preceptor, "O Bhagavan! After giving you all my alms, I go out and beg again to support myself." The preceptor replied, "That is not the way to obey your preceptor. When you behave thus, you deprive others of their sustenance. You have shown that you are covetous." Having agreed to his preceptor's words, he went away to look after the

cows. Having done that, he returned to his preceptor's house, stood before him and respectfully saluted him. On seeing that he was still fat, the preceptor said again, "I take all your alms and you do not go out to beg for a second time. How do you support yourself now?" He replied to his preceptor, "I live on the milk of these cows." The preceptor replied, "It is not right for you to drink the milk without first asking for my permission." He agreed to his preceptor's words and went to look after the cows. Having done that, he returned to his preceptor's house, stood before him and respectfully saluted him. On seeing that he was still fat, the preceptor said, "You do not support yourself through alms. You do not go begging for a second time. You do not drink milk. But you are still fat. How do you support yourself now?" Thus questioned, he replied to his preceptor, "I drink the froth the calves throw out when they drink at their mother's udders." The preceptor replied, "The good calves throw out generous quantities of froth out of kindness towards you. But if you act like this, you deprive the calves of their sustenance. It is not proper for you to drink the froth." Upamanyu agreed to his preceptor's words and went to look after the cattle, without food.

'Having been prevented, he did not seek alms. He did not go begging a second time. He did not drink the milk. He did not drink the froth. One day in the forest, suffering from hunger, he ate the leaves of the *arka* tree.[4] His eyes were affected by the acrid, pungent, bitter and unripe arka leaves and he went blind. Wandering blindly around, he fell into a well. When he did not return, the preceptor told his students, "I have forbidden Upamanyu everything and perhaps he is angry. That is the reason he has not returned and has stayed out so long." Having said this, he went to the forest and cried out in a loud voice to Upamanyu. "O Upamanyu! Where are you? Come here my son." On hearing his preceptor's voice, he replied, "O preceptor! I am here. I have fallen into a well." The preceptor asked, "How did you fall into this well?" He said, "I ate the leaves of the arka tree and went blind. That is how I fell into the well." The preceptor replied, "Sing praises of the two Ashvins.[5] Those divine physicians will restore your eyesight." On hearing this, he[6] began to worship the Ashvins with verses from the Rig Veda. "O fiery first-born beings, born before creation. I worship you two, infinite and radiant. You are birds with beautiful feathers, beyond measure, but all-pervading in the world and the universe; you vest in all beings. You are golden eagles into which everything disappears. You are free from falsehood and you do not decay. You are always triumphant. Having created the sun, you weave night and day with black and white threads. For our good fortune, you freed the bird of life that was seized by time. Those who suffer from the delusion of the senses think that you, who are beyond matter, have forms. Three hundred and sixty milking cows[7] give birth to a single calf,[8] the creator and destroyer of time. The calves are in different sheds, but they suckle the same truth. The Ashvins milk them of true knowledge. There are 720 spokes on the nave.[9] To

the rims of the wheel are stuck another twenty.[10] Without a rim, this wheel revolves, without decay and with delusion. O Ashvins! Set this wheel in motion. One wheel of time revolves with twelve rims.[11] Six spokes[12] and one axle bear the immortal nectar to which the gods of the universe are addicted. O Ashvins! Free me from this wheel of time. After killing Vritra, Indra once won back the nectar. Like that, the Ashvins have won it back. The Ashvins cleft the mountain in all forms and freed the pleasures obtained from the senses. At the beginning of creation, you created the ten directions of the universe.[13] You placed the sun and the moon above. The rishis perform yajnas according to their courses and so do gods and men who inhabit the earth. Mixing many colours, you have created objects of sight and the world and the universe were created from these. Gods and men who inhabit the earth follow these. O Ashvins! I worship only you and I worship the sky you have created. You are free and without decay, and create order from which even the gods are not free. You are the seed of everything. As male and female, you swallow food that becomes vital fluid and blood. The newborn baby sucks the mother's breast and you are the baby. O Ashvins! Restore my sight and grant me life." Thus praised, the Ashvins appeared and said, "We are pleased. Here is a cake. Take it and eat it." Thus addressed, he replied, "O Ashvins! Your words can never be false. But I cannot eat this cake without offering it to my preceptor." Then the Ashvins replied, "Many years ago, your preceptor once worshipped us. We were pleased and gave him a cake. He ate it without offering it to his preceptor. You should do what he had then done." Thus addressed, he replied, "O Ashvins! I crave your pardon. I cannot eat this cake without offering it to my preceptor." The Ashvins said, "We are pleased with your devotion to your preceptor. Your preceptor has teeth made of black iron. Yours will be golden. Your sight will be restored and you will have good fortune." Thus addressed by the Ashvins, he[14] regained his sight. He returned to his preceptor, saluted him and told him everything. He[15] was very pleased with him and told him he would obtain good fortune as the Ashvins had promised. All the Vedas would be manifest to him. This was his trial.[16]

'The other disciple of Ayoda-Dhoumya's was named Veda. One day, his preceptor told him, "Veda, my son! Stay here in my house and serve your preceptor. Fortune will be yours." He gave his promise and remained for a long time in his preceptor's house, always obeying his preceptor. Like a bull always yoked to pull a heavy load, he endured the difficulties of heat and cold, hunger and thirst, and never complained. After a long time had passed, his preceptor was satisfied with him. Because of his preceptor's satisfaction, he obtained complete knowledge and good fortune. This was his trial. Having received his preceptor's permission, he returned home from his preceptor's house and embarked on the householder stage of life. Three disciples came to live with him. But he never asked them to undertake any work or serve him in any way. Since he had

himself suffered from the miseries of living in his preceptor's house, he did not wish to be severe on his disciples. After some time had passed, two Kshatriyas, Janamejaya and Poushya, came to the Brahmana Veda and chose him as their preceptor.

'One day, he had to leave to officiate at a sacrifice. He told one of his disciples named Utanka to look after his house. "Utanka," he said, "whatever needs to be done in my house, perform it without negligence." Leaving these instructions, Veda went away on his journey. Utanka lived in his preceptor's house, always following his preceptor's instructions. While he lived there, the women of his preceptor's household assembled near him and told him, "Your preceptor's wife is at the right period for conception and your preceptor is away from home. You must stand in his place and ensure that her period does not go barren." Thus addressed by the women, he replied, "It is not proper for me to do this at the request of women. My preceptor has not asked me to do anything that is not proper." After some time, his preceptor returned home from his journey. He heard everything that had happened and was very pleased. He told him, "Utanka, my son, what favour can I bestow on you? You have faithfully served me in accordance with what is proper. Consequently, the fondness we have for each other has increased. I grant you permission to leave. Go, and all your desires will be fulfilled." Thus addressed, he replied, "Let me do what you wish. For it is said, he who asks without rightfully giving in return and he who gives without rightfully receiving in return, one of those will die and enmity created between them.[17] Now that you have given me permission to leave, I wish to give my preceptor what he desires." On hearing this, the preceptor replied, "Utanka, my son, wait for some time." After some time, Utanka again told his preceptor, "Command me as to what I should give my preceptor." His preceptor then replied, "Utanka, my son, you have asked me many times about what to give to your preceptor. Go to my wife and ask her what you should bring as a gift. Bring what she wants." Thus instructed by his preceptor, Utanka went to his preceptor's wife and said, "O madam! My preceptor has given me permission to go home. But I wish to bring a gift that brings pleasure and then go home, free from my debt. Command me as to what I should bring as a preceptor's gift." Thus addressed, his preceptor's wife replied, "Go to King Poushya and get from him the earrings that his queen wears. Bring those here. Four days from now, the day is holy. On that day, I wish to appear radiant before the Brahmanas and serve them wearing those earrings. If you can do this, good fortune will be yours." Thus instructed by his preceptor's wife, Utanka took his leave.

'When he was passing along the route, he met an extraordinarily large bull and an extraordinarily large man riding on it. The man addressed Utanka. "O Utanka! Eat the dung of this bull." Though thus addressed, Utanka refused. The man said again, "Utanka, eat it. Do not hesitate. Your preceptor has himself eaten it before." Thus addressed, Utanka agreed and ate the bull's dung and drank the bull's urine and then

left for where the Kshatriya Poushya was. As he came near, Utanka found him seated. Utanka saluted him and said, “I have come to you as someone who asks.” The other answered, “O Bhagavan! I am Poushya. What can I do?” Utanka told him, “I have come to ask for a pair of earrings your wife wears, to give them as a gift to my preceptor. Please give me those earrings.” He told him, “Go to the inner apartments of the palace and ask the queen.” He did as he had been asked, went to the inner apartments, but could not see the queen. He again told Poushya, “You should not treat me with a lie. Your queen is truly not in the inner apartment. I could not see her.” Thus addressed, Poushya thought for a while and said, “You must be defiled with leftover food. Try and remember. The queen cannot be seen by anyone who is defiled with leftover food. Since she is faithful to her husband, she doesn’t appear before anyone thus defiled.” Thus addressed, Utanka thought for a while. Remembering, he said, “Yes, that is true. Since I was in a hurry, I performed my ablutions while I was walking.” Poushya retorted, “This is a breaking of the rules. Ablutions cannot be performed while standing or walking.” Utanka agreed and sat down facing the east. He first washed his hands, face and feet properly. Then, silently, he thrice sipped just enough water, free from scum and froth, to reach his heart. He then washed twice and cleaned his orifices with water. Having done this, he entered the inner apartment and saw the queen.

‘On seeing him, the queen stood up, saluted him with respect and said, “O Bhagavan! Welcome. Command me as to what I should do for you.” He told her, “You should give me your earrings. I ask for them because I wish to give them as a gift to my preceptor.” She was pleased at his direct words and thought that such a worthy recipient could not be refused. Therefore, she took off her earrings and gave them to him. And told him, “Takshaka, king of the nagas, wants these earrings. Please be careful when carrying them.” Thus addressed, he told the queen, “Madam! Be reassured. Takshaka, king of the nagas, cannot overpower me.” Having said this, he took leave of the queen and went to Poushya.

‘He told him, “O, Poushya! I am very pleased.” Poushya replied, “O Bhagavan! You are a guest of many qualities. After a long time, we have found a worthy recipient in you. Therefore, I wish to perform a shraddha.[18] Stay for some time.” Then Utanka said, “Yes, I will wait. But I wish to leave quickly. Please bring whatever food is ready.” As asked, he[19] offered food that was readily available. Utanka saw that the food that was brought to him was cold and had a hair in it. He considered the food unclean and told Poushya, “Because you have offered me unclean food, you will go blind.” In turn, Poushya replied, “Since you have rendered unclean what was clean food,[20] you will be without offspring.” Then Poushya inspected the cleanliness of the food closely. Because the food had been prepared by a woman who had not braided her hair, Poushya found that the food was cold and had a hair in it and was unclean. He pacified Utanka, “O Bhagavan! The food placed before you was cold, had a hair in it and was unclean. This

was an error and I seek your pardon. Please don't make me go blind." Utanka replied, "What I say must happen. You will go blind, but you will recover your eyesight soon. Grant me that your curse on me should also not have effect." Poushya said, "I cannot take back my curse even if I want to. Even now, my anger has not been pacified. Don't you know that a Brahmana's heart is soft as butter, even though his words are like sharp razors? The Kshatriya is not like that. His words are soft like butter, but his heart is like a sharp instrument. Since that is the case, I cannot take back my curse, because my heart is still sharp. Please go." Then Utanka said, "I showed you the unclean food that was placed before me and allowed you to pacify me. Before that, you said I would be without offspring because I had rendered clean food unclean. But the food was unclean. Therefore, your curse will have no effect. Enough." Saying this, Utanka left, taking the earrings with him.

'On his way, Utanka saw a naked mendicant[21] come towards him. He was sometimes visible and sometimes invisible. Placing the earrings on the ground, Utanka then went for some water. The mendicant quickly came to the place, picked up the earrings and ran away. Then Utanka dashed after him and seized him. Then Takshaka suddenly gave up his disguise, assumed his real form and disappeared into a large hole in the ground. Entering the world of the nagas, he went to his own home. Utanka followed him through the same hole and on entering the place, praised the nagas with the following words. "O snakes![22] Subjects of King Airavata,[23] you adorn battles, you shower like clouds, driven by wind and charged with lightning. O offspring of Airavata! Handsome and many-formed, bedecked with earrings of many colours, you shine like the sun in the sky. Many are the habitations of the nagas on the northern banks of the Ganga. Who wishes to march in an army against the blazing sun without Airavata? When Dhritarashtra[24] goes out, 20,000 nagas march as companions. I salute all of you who have Airavata as their elder brother, whether they live near him or far away. For the sake of the earrings, I salute Takshaka, son of Kadru, who has always lived in Kurukshetra and the Khandava region. Takshaka and Ashvasena[25] were constant companions when they lived on the banks of the river Ikshumati in Kurukshetra. I must also salute Takshaka's youngest brother, the great-souled Shrutasena,[26] who lived in Mahadyumna in a desire to become a chief of the nagas." When he saw that in spite of the salutations, he did not get back the earrings, he saw two women weaving a cloth on a loom. There were black and white threads in the loom. He also saw a wheel being turned by six boys and a man who was handsome.

'He praised them with the following *mantras*. "Six boys keep turning this wheel with 360 spokes, perpetually moving in a cycle of twenty-four divisions. Two young women, representing the universe, are continually weaving with black and white threads, creating worlds and beings of the past and the present. O master of the thunderbolt![27]

O protector of the worlds, the killer of Vritra[28] and the destroyer of Namuchi![29] O great-souled one who is dressed in black, who brings out truth and untruth in the worlds! O he who in ancient times obtained as his mount the horse,[30] which was another form of the fire-god, from the depths of the water. I always salute you, the lord of the universe. O lord of the three worlds! O Purandara![31]" Then that man said to him, "I am pleased with your salutations. What can I do to please you?" He[32] then told him, "Let the serpents be in my power." Then that man again said, "Blow into this horse's anus." He then blew into the horse's anus and from all the horse's orifices that were blown into there billowed out flames and smoke. This burnt down the world of the nagas. Then the alarmed Takshaka, scared of being burnt by the fire, took the earrings, fled from his palace and told Utanka, "Please take back these earrings." Utanka took the earrings back.

'But having taken them back, he began to think. "Today is the sacred day mentioned by my preceptor's wife. I have come very far away. How can I then give these to her?" As he was thus thinking, the man said, "Utanka, get on this horse. It will instantly take you to your preceptor's house." He agreed, mounted the horse and reached his preceptor's house. After bathing, the preceptor's wife was dressing her hair, thinking that if Utanka did not come, she would curse him. At that time, Utanka entered, saluted her and gave her the earrings. She said, "Utanka, you have come at the right time and the right place. Welcome, my son. You have been fortunate that I have not cursed you. May good fortune be with you." Then Utanka saluted his preceptor and his preceptor said, "Welcome, Utanka, my son. What took you so long?" Utanka replied, "Takshaka, king of the nagas, cast impediments in my path and I had to go the world of the nagas. There I saw two women weaving a cloth with black and white threads on a loom. What did that mean? I saw a wheel with twelve spokes being turned by six boys. What did that mean? I also saw a man. Who was he? I saw an extraordinarily large horse. What was that? And as I was on my way along the road, I saw a man mounted on a bull. He respectfully addressed me as Utanka, and asked me to eat the bull's dung, as my preceptor had done. On being requested by the man, I ate the bull's dung. Who was this man? Please instruct me, what did all this mean?" Thus addressed, the preceptor told him, "The two women you saw are Dhata and Vidhata. The black and white threads represent night and day. The wheel with twelve spokes is the year with twelve months and the six boys turning it are the six seasons. The man is Parjanya.[33] The horse is Agni.[34] And the bull you saw on the way is Airavata, the king of elephants. The man who rode it is Indra. The bull's dung that you ate is the nectar of immortality. It is certainly because you ate this that you were not killed in the world of the nagas. Indra is my friend and it is because of his kindness that you have returned with the earrings. Now, amiable Utanka, I give you permission to go. You will obtain good fortune."

Having received his preceptor's permission, Utanka went towards Hastinapura, angry with Takshaka, and wishing to seek revenge.

'In a short while, the good Brahmana Utanka reached Hastinapura and went to seek King Janamejaya, who had only recently returned victorious from Takshashila. He saw him seated, surrounded by his advisers. He uttered blessings of victory as was proper and then addressed him in words that had the right tone and metre. "O best of kings! You are spending your time in juvenile pursuits, when an important duty urgently demands your attention." Thus addressed by the Brahmana, King Janamejaya saluted him, as was proper, and said in a gracious tone, "I perform the duties of my Kshatriya birth by looking after my subjects. Tell me, O king of Brahmanas, what should I do? I am obediently waiting for your words." Having been thus addressed by that best of kings, the best of Brahmanas, superior because of his good deeds, replied thus, "O king of kings! It was Takshaka who performed violence on your father.[35] Therefore, you should take vengeance on that evil-souled serpent. I think the time has come for you to take revenge, as destiny has ordained. Go, O king! And take revenge for the death of your great-souled father, who caused no offence, but succumbed to the five elements, like a tree struck by thunder, having been bitten by this evil-souled serpent. Drunk with power, Takshaka, worst of the serpent race, committed a crime when he bit your godlike father, the protector of the lineage of royal sages among kings. The evil one even repulsed Kashyapa.[36] It is right for you, O king, to burn the evil one in the blazing fire of a snake-sacrifice. Do what is necessary and you will avenge your father. Thus, O king, you will also do me a great favour. O king of the world! O king who are pure! It was that evil one who obstructed me when I went on my preceptor's work." On hearing these words, the king was angry with Takshaka. As ghee stokes the sacrificial fire, the offerings of Utanka's words inflamed him. In Utanka's presence, the sorrowful king asked his advisers the details about his father's ascent to heaven. When he heard from Utanka the circumstances of his father's death, the king of kings was overcome with sorrow and grief.'

# Section Four

# Pouloma Parva

*This parva has 153 shlokas and nine chapters.*

*Chapter 4: 11 shlokas*
*Chapter 5: 26 shlokas*
*Chapter 6: 16 shlokas*
*Chapter 7: 26 shlokas*
*Chapter 8: 22 shlokas*
*Chapter 9: 22 shlokas*
*Chapter 10: 8 shlokas*
*Chapter 11: 17 shlokas*
*Chapter 12: 5 shlokas*

*The meat of the Mahabharata doesn't start in this parva, since one is still on the snake-sacrifice. Indeed, this parva is mostly about the Bhargava lineage, descended from the great sage Bhrigu. Bhrigu's son was the famous Shukra or Shukracharya and so was the sage Chyavana. Bhrigu married Puloma and anyone descended from Puloma is called Pouloma. That is how this parva obtains its name. The chapters in this parva take us down Bhrigu's lineage, through Chyavana, Pramati, Ruru and Shunaka.*

4[1]

Lomaharshana's son, the suta Ugrashrava, learned in ancient tales, was present at the twelve-year sacrifice of Kulapati Shounaka, held in Naimisharanya. Having spent a great deal of labour in learning the Puranas, he knew them well. He stood before the sages at the sacrifice, and with folded hands, addressed them, 'What do you wish to hear? What shall I tell?'

The sages replied, 'O son of Lomaharshana! We wish to hear, and you will tell us, those who are eager to listen, some excellent tales. But at the moment, the revered Kulapati Shounaka is busy in the room with the holy fire. He knows the divine tales about the gods and the demons. He also knows the stories of the men, the nagas and the gandharvas. O Souti! At this sacrifice, that learned Brahmana is the chief priest, capable, faithful to his vows and learned in all the sacred texts and the aranyakas. He is always truthful, a hermit strict in his austerities and vows, and calm. He is respected by all of us and we must wait for him. When he has taken the honoured seat meant for the preceptor, you will reply to what the best of the Brahmanas asks you.'

Souti replied, 'So it shall be. When that great-souled preceptor has sat down, I shall narrate, as asked by him, all the sacred stories on a wide variety of subjects.'

After that, when that bull among Brahmanas had finished all actions in accordance with the proper rites and had prayed to the gods and offered water to the ancestors, he came to the place of sacrifice where Souti was seated, in front of that assembly of

brahmarshis, inflexible and successful in their austerities. Then, when Shounaka was seated among the officiating priests and assistants, who were seated, Shounaka said the following.

5

Shounaka said, 'My son, in days long past, your father learnt all the Puranas. O son of Lomaharshana! Is it the case that you have learnt them too? In the Puranas are described divine stories and accounts of the wise of the original lineage. In the past, long ago, we have heard these from your father. From those tales, I wish to hear that of the Bhrigu lineage. Tell us that story. We are all eager to hear.'

Souti said, 'That which was correctly learnt in ancient times by great-souled Brahmanas who were the best, that which was learnt and recited by the Brahmana Vaishampayana, that which was correctly studied by my father and from him learnt by me, O descendant of the Bhrigu race,[2] hear that story of the Bhrigu lineage, revered by the gods, Indra, Agni and the Maruts.[3] O chief and great sage, I shall recite to you the history of this lineage, and related stories, as it is recounted in the Puranas. Bhrigu gave birth to a beloved son, named Chyavana Bhargava. Chyavana had a righteous son named Pramati and Pramati, in turn, had a son named Ruru, from Ghritachi. From his wife Pramadvara, Ruru had a son named Shunaka. He was righteous and learned in the Vedas, he was your great-grandfather. He was devoted to asceticism, famous, learned in the shrutis, truthful, righteous, wise in knowledge of the brahman and always had control over his senses.'

Shounaka said, 'O son of Suta, why was the great-souled son of Bhrigu known as Chyavana? I am asking you, tell me.'

Souti replied, 'Bhrigu had a beloved wife, widely known as Puloma. She conceived from Bhrigu's semen and a child formed in her womb. In time, when the equable and chaste wife Puloma was in that condition, one day, the famous and righteous Bhrigu went out for his ablutions. It was then that a rakshasa named Puloman came to his hermitage. Having entered the hermitage, he saw Bhrigu's unblemished wife, and seeing her, he was filled with lust and lost his senses. On seeing that a guest had come, the beautiful Puloma served him with roots and fruits from the forest. O Brahmana, having seen her, the rakshasa burned with lust and wished to carry away the unblemished woman. He went to the room where the holy fire was blazing brightly and the rakshasa then asked the flaming fire, "O Agni! Tell me truthfully, under oath, whose wife is she? O Pavaka![4]Tell me the truth, I am asking you. This beautiful lady was earlier engaged to be my wife. But later, her father gave her to Bhrigu, who thus committed a falsehood. Tell me truly if this beautiful lady can be called Bhrigu's wife. Since I have found her in the hermitage, I wish to carry her away. My hurt burns with rage that Bhrigu should have obtained this slim-waisted woman who was my wife first." Thus did the rakshasa

repeatedly ask the flaming fire this uncertain question of whether the lady was Bhrigu's wife. "O Agni! You are always there in every being as witness of their righteous deeds and evil ones. O wise one! Answer my question truthfully. The wrong-doer Bhrigu abducted her, though she was my wife first. I wish to hear the truth from you. When I hear the truth from you about whether she is Bhrigu's wife or not, I shall carry her away from the hermitage in your presence. Therefore, O fire, tell me the truth." Having heard these words, the seven-tongued fire was extremely distressed. He was afraid to lie because of the fear of a curse. At the same time, he was scared of Bhrigu's curse.'

6

Souti said, 'O Brahmana, having heard Agni's words, the rakshasa assumed the form of a boar and carried her away with the speed of the mind and of thought. Bhrigu's child, who was in her womb, was angry at this violence and fell down from his mother's womb. For this reason, he got the name Chyavana.[5] On seeing the child fall from his mother's womb, blazing like the sun, that rakshasa let go of her, but fell down, burnt to ashes. O Brahmana, O descendant of Bhrigu! Puloma, the lady with the beautiful hips, almost fainted with grief, but picked up Chyavana and walked away. Brahma himself, the grandfather of all the worlds, saw Bhrigu's unblemished wife weeping, eyes filled with tears. The venerable Brahma, grandfather of all beings, consoled his daughter-in-law and a great river was formed from the tears that fell from her eyes. The river followed the footsteps of the famous Bhrigu's wife. On seeing it follow the path of his son's wife, the venerable grandfather of the world named it himself. He called it Vadhusara and it passed near Chyavana's hermitage. Thus was Chyavana born, the mighty son of Bhrigu.

'On seeing Chyavana and also the beautiful young lady there, the angry Bhrigu asked his wife Puloma, "Who told the rakshasa who was here about you, so that he wanted to carry you away? O lady of beautiful smiles! That rakshasa could not have himself known that you were my wife. Tell me who told him, because I wish to curse him in my anger. Who does not fear my curse? Who dared to transgress?" Puloma replied, "O Bhagavan! I was made known to the rakshasa by Agni. Then that rakshasa carried me away, crying like a female osprey. I was freed only through the extraordinary energy of your son. That rakshasa let go of me, fell down on the ground and was burnt to ashes." Having heard this from Puloma, Bhrigu became very angry. Out of his anger, he cursed Agni that he would be an omnivore.'[6]

7

Souti said, 'Being thus cursed by Bhrigu, the angry Agni said, "O Brahmana! What do you mean by displaying this rashness today? I always try to stick to the righteous path and tell the truth impartially. On being asked, I told the truth. Where is my

transgression? A witness who is asked and knows the facts, but testifies to that which is false, dooms both his ancestors and his descendants for seven generations. And he who knows the truth about an action, but knowingly does not speak, is certainly tainted by the same sin. I am also capable of cursing you, but I hold Brahmanas in esteem. O Brahmana! Although these are known to you, I shall nevertheless recount them to you. Listen. Having multiplied myself through my powers of yoga, I am present in many forms, in *agnihotras*,[7] *sattras*[8] and other sacrifices and rituals. When ghee is offered to me in accordance with the rituals prescribed in the Vedas, the gods and also the ancestors appear in it and are satisfied. The gods are the waters and the ancestors are also the waters. The gods and the ancestors have equal rights to perform *darshas*[9] and *pournamasas*.[10] Therefore, the gods are the ancestors and the ancestors are the gods. Depending on the stage of the moon, they are worshipped as one and also separately. The gods and the ancestors eat what is poured on me. I am therefore known as the mouth of the thirty-three gods[11] and the ancestors. On the day of the new moon the ancestors, and on the day of the full moon the gods, are fed through my mouth the ghee that is offered to me. If I am their mouth, how can I become an omnivore?" After contemplating this problem for some time, Agni withdrew himself from everywhere, from the agnihotras of the Brahmanas, from sattras and other sacrifices. Being deprived of *omkaras*, *vashatkaras*,[12] *svadhas*[13] and *svahas*,[14] all the creatures became miserable.

'Then, in great anxiety, the sages went to the gods and said the following words. "O faultless beings! Because of the loss of fire, the three worlds are confounded at having lost their sacrifices. Without losing any more time, please decree what is to be done." The gods and the sages then went before Brahma. They told him about the curse on Agni and his withdrawal from all sacrifices. They said, "O illustrious one! Agni has been cursed by Bhrigu for some unknown reason. How can he who is the mouth of the gods and receives the first part of all sacrificial offerings and is also the acceptor of all offerings in all the worlds ever become an omnivore?" Having heard all this, the creator of the world summoned Agni to his presence. He addressed Agni, who is the creator of all the worlds, like him, and is also eternal, in gentle words. "You are the creator of all the worlds and you are their destroyer. You preserve the three worlds and ensure that all sacrifices and ceremonies are preserved. Therefore, O lord of the worlds! Act in a way that the rites thrive. O eater of the sacrificial ghee! How have you become thus deluded? You are always pure in this universe. You are the refuge of all living creatures. With your entire body, you cannot become an omnivore. O Fire, with a crest of flames! Only flames that are meant for accepting oblations will devour everything. Just as everything touched by the sun's rays are rendered pure, anything that has been burnt in your flames will become pure. O Agni! You are the supreme energy. You have issued forth from your own energy. Through your own lustrous power, make the sage's curse

come true. Accept the gods' share, and your own, when they are offered into your mouth." Agni replied to the grandfather, "Let it be that way." He went away to obey the instructions of the god Parameshthin.[15] In great delight, the gods and the sages returned the way they had come. And the sages continued to perform all their sacrifices and ceremonies, as they had done before. The gods rejoiced in heaven, as did the many living beings on earth. Freed from the taint of the curse, Agni was also extremely happy. Such is the ancient history of the curse that was imposed on Agni, with the destruction of Puloman and the birth of Chyavana.'

8

Souti said, 'O Brahmana! Chyavana, the son of Bhrigu, then had a son from his wife, named Sukanya. Sukanya's son was the great-souled Pramati, of resplendent energy. In turn, Pramati had a son named Ruru, from Ghritachi. Ruru had a son named Shunaka from his wife Pramadvara. O Brahmana! I will tell you all the accounts of Ruru, whose energy was resplendent. Listen to it in detail. In days long gone by, there was a sage named Sthulakesha. He possessed the power of austerities and learning and was known for devoting himself to the welfare of all creatures. O Brahmana! O sage! At this time, Menaka[16] conceived a child through the king of the gandharvas, named Vishvavasu. O descendant of the Bhrigu lineage! When the time came, the apsara Menaka delivered her child near Sthulakesha's hermitage. After leaving her child on the banks of the river, she went away. The great sage and great Brahmana, Sthulakesha, found the daughter abandoned on the banks of the river. He saw her to be blazing in beauty, like the child of an immortal. On finding her, the best of the sages was driven by compassion and adopted her. The beautiful and radiant girl grew up in that hermitage. Since she was superior to all the others in beauty and in every quality, the great sage gave her the name of Pramadvara.[17]

'When Ruru saw Pramadvara in that hermitage of his,[18] the righteous man, in control over himself, fell in love with her. Through his friends, he made his father Pramati, descended from Bhrigu, acquainted with his love. Thereupon, Pramati asked the famous Sthulakesha. Then the sage engaged Pramadvara with Ruru, fixing the date for marriage as one when the *nakshatra*[19] Bhagadaiva[20] would be in the ascendant. A few days before the date fixed for the wedding, when the beautiful girl was playing with her friends, her time having come and driven by destiny, she didn't see a coiled snake and stepped on it with her foot. Driven by the requirements of destiny, the snake sunk its venomous fangs into the body of the careless girl. As soon as she was bitten by the snake, she suddenly fell down senseless on the ground. She, who was so beautiful when alive, became painful to look at when dead. Thanks to the snake's venom, the slender-waisted girl looked more beautiful than when alive, as if asleep on the ground. Her

father and other hermits who were there, saw her lying motionless on the ground, as beautiful as a lotus. Overcome with compassion, all the best of Brahmanas assembled there—Svastyatreya, Mahajanu, Kushika, Shankhamekhala, Bharadvaja, Kounakutsa, Arshtisena and Goutama, and also Pramati and his son and other inhabitants of the forest. They were overcome with compassion when they saw the maiden dead with the snake's venom and wept. But in great pain, Ruru left.'

9

Souti said, 'When the Brahmanas were seated there in a circle, Ruru went into the deep forest and wept loudly. Overcome with grief, his lamentations were piteous. Thinking and remembering his beloved Pramadvara, he mourned. "She is lying on the ground, that slender-bodied beauty, increasing my grief and that of her relatives. What can be more painful than this? If I have ever given alms, performed austerities, if I have shown respect to my superiors, let those merits instil life into my beloved. If I have controlled myself from the day I was born, if I have stuck to the prescribed rites, let the beautiful Pramadvara rise up right now." The messenger of the gods said, "O Ruru! The words that you utter in your grief can have no effect. O righteous one! Someone whose mortal time on this earth has run out, cannot come back to life again. The miserly life has run out for this daughter of the gandharva and the apsara. Therefore, do not yield even a little to grief. However, in advance, the great gods have devised an antidote. If you wish to implement this, you will get back your Pramadvara." Ruru replied, "O traveller in the sky! Tell me the details of the means the gods have provided for in advance. I will implement what I hear. Your honour, grant me deliverance." The messenger of the gods said, "O descendant of the Bhrigu lineage! Give up half of your life to the girl. O Ruru! Your wife Pramadvara will rise up again." Ruru replied, "O best of the travellers in the sky! I give up half of my life to the girl. Let my beloved arise, in the form and adornment of love." Then the supreme king of the gandharvas and the supreme messenger of the gods together went to Dharmaraja.[21]

'They addressed him in these words. "O Dharmaraja! If you so think, let Ruru's beautiful bride Pramadvara, who is now dead, arise with half of Ruru's life." Dharmaraja replied, "O messenger of the gods! If you so wish, let Ruru's wife Pramadvara arise with half of Ruru's life." When he thus spoke, the beautiful lady Pramadvara, engaged to Ruru, arose as if from a slumber, endowed with half of Ruru's life. It was later seen in the future that the illustrious Ruru gave up half of his long life for the sake of his wife and this shortened his own. Thereafter, on the designated day, their respective fathers gladly married them in accordance with the rites and the couple passed their days, devoted to each other. Having obtained a wife who was so difficult to get, beautiful and radiant as the filaments of a lotus, the sage of firm austerities took a vow to destroy the snakes. Whenever he saw a snake, he was possessed with terrible

anger. If it was near, he always killed it with a weapon.

‘O Brahmana! One day, Ruru entered a very large forest. He saw an old *dundubha*[22] lying there. With the intention of killing it, he then raised staff, like the staff of death and struck it. The dundubha then addressed the Brahmana. “O ascetic! I have not done you an iota of harm today. For what reason and in what violent rage do you wish to do violence to me?”’

10

‘Ruru said, “My wife, whom I love as much as I love my own life, was bitten by a snake. O snake! At that time, I took a terrible vow that thereafter I would kill every snake that I saw. It is for that reason that I do violence to you and I shall deprive you of your life.” The dundubha replied, “O Brahmana! There are other snakes that bite mankind. The dundubhas are snakes only by smell; you should not kill them. We may share the same misfortune, but we do not share the same good fortune. We may share the same sorrows, but we do not share the same joys. Since you cannot differentiate between right and wrong, you should not kill the dundubhas.” On hearing the words of the snake, Ruru did not kill the dundubha, because he was scared and thought it might be a rishi.

‘The revered Ruru now sought to pacify the snake. “O snake!” he said. “If you desire, tell me how you came to be so metamorphosed.” The dundubha replied, “O Ruru! I was earlier a rishi named Sahasrapata. I became a snake through a Brahmana’s curse.” Ruru asked, “O best of the snakes! Why were you cursed by an angry Brahmana and how long will you have to continue in this present form?”’

11

‘The dundubha said, “In times long past, I had a Brahmana friend named Khagama. He was truthful in his words and possessed powers through his austerities. When he was engaged in the agnihotra sacrifice, out of juvenile playfulness, I made a snake out of blades of grass and tried to frighten him. He fainted. When he regained consciousness, that truthful ascetic, rigid in his vows, told me in great anger, ‘Since you created a powerless mock snake to frighten me, you will yourself turn into a powerless[23] snake through my curse.’ O ascetic! I knew the power of his austerities. Therefore, very agitated in my heart, I told him, ‘I stand here, bowing before you and saluting you with folded hands. Since I am your friend, I did this only to make you laugh. O Brahmana! You should forgive me and take back your curse.’ Seeing that my mind was thus agitated, the ascetic was moved and breathing hot and hard, he said, ‘What I have said must come to pass. But, O ascetic! Since you are always rigid in your austerities and unwavering from your rites, hear what I have to say and hold it close to your heart. When Pramati’s son, the pure Ruru appears, you will be immediately freed from the curse on seeing him.’ You are that Ruru, the son of Pramati. Regaining my form, I will

tell you something for your benefit.

'"O best of beings! The righteous path is non-violence and that of not destroying life. Therefore, a Brahmana should never take the life of any living creature. The sacred texts say that a Brahmana should always be peaceful, learned in the Vedas and the Vedangas, should make all creatures fearless and should be non-violent, truthful and forgiving. The supreme duty of Brahmanas is to retain the knowledge of the Vedas. The duty of the Kshatriyas is not meant for you. O Ruru! Listen to me. To hold up the rod of punishment, to rule over and protect subjects, these are the natural duties of Kshatriyas. In days gone by, the snakes were destroyed in Janamejaya's sacrifice. But the frightened snakes were saved by a Brahmana at the snake-sacrifice. O supreme among the Brahmanas! This was Astika, chief among the Brahmanas, powerful in his austerities, brave, strong and learned in the Vedas."'

12

'Ruru said, "O supreme among the Brahmanas! Why did King Janamejaya cause violence to the snakes and how did he destroy them? O best of the Brahmanas! Why were the snakes saved by the wise Astika? I wish to hear all this."

'The sage said, "O Ruru! You will hear the great history of Astika from a Brahmana who will recount it." Saying this, he vanished.'

Souti said, 'Ruru rushed to look for the rishi, but could not find him anywhere in the forest. Not finding him, he was tired and fell down on the ground. Regaining his senses, he returned home and asked his father. On his asking, his father told him the entire story.'

# Section Five

# Astika Parva

*This parva has 1025 shlokas and forty-one chapters.*

*Chapter 13: 45 shlokas*
*Chapter 14: 23 shlokas*
*Chapter 15: 13 shlokas*
*Chapter 16: 40 shlokas*
*Chapter 17: 30 shlokas*
*Chapter 18: 11 shlokas*
*Chapter 19: 17 shlokas*
*Chapter 20: 15 shlokas*
*Chapter 21: 17 shlokas*
*Chapter 22: 5 shlokas*
*Chapter 23: 12 shlokas*
*Chapter 24: 14 shlokas*
*Chapter 25: 33 shlokas*
*Chapter 26: 47 shlokas*
*Chapter 27: 35 shlokas*
*Chapter 28: 25 shlokas*
*Chapter 29: 23 shlokas*
*Chapter 30: 22 shlokas*
*Chapter 31: 18 shlokas*
*Chapter 32: 25 shlokas*
*Chapter 33: 31 shlokas*
*Chapter 34: 18 shlokas*
*Chapter 35: 13 shlokas*
*Chapter 36: 26 shlokas*
*Chapter 37: 27 shlokas*
*Chapter 38: 39 shlokas*
*Chapter 39: 33 shlokas*
*Chapter 40: 11 shlokas*
*Chapter 41: 30 shlokas*
*Chapter 42: 20 shlokas*
*Chapter 43: 39 shlokas*
*Chapter 44: 22 shlokas*
*Chapter 45: 28 shlokas*
*Chapter 46: 41 shlokas*
*Chapter 47: 25 shlokas*
*Chapter 48: 26 shlokas*
*Chapter 49: 28 shlokas*
*Chapter 50: 17 shlokas*
*Chapter 51: 23 shlokas*
*Chapter 52: 22 shlokas*
*Chapter 53: 36 shlokas*

*It is one of the longer parvas and is about the snake-sacrifice, which provides the setting where the Mahabharata story was told. The parva is named after a sage named Astika, who saved the snakes (the major ones) from the*

*snake-sacrifice.*

## 13

Shounaka asked, 'Why did that tiger among kings, King Janamejaya, decide to have a snake-sacrifice until all the snakes were destroyed? Why did Astika, supreme among the Brahmanas, save the snakes from the blazing fire? Whose son was the king who performed the snake-sacrifice? Whose son was that best of the Brahmanas? Tell us.'

Souti said, 'O best of the Brahmanas! O best of the speakers! I shall recount in all its details the great story of Astika, as it was told. Listen.'

Shounaka said, 'I wish to hear in detail the beautiful story of the ancient and famous Brahmana sage Astika.'

Souti said, 'The wise know this ancient story as history. It was recounted by Krishna Dvaipayana to the inhabitants of the Naimisharanya. At the request of the Brahmanas, my learned father Lomaharshana, Vyasa's disciple and a suta, once narrated it. O Shounaka! I was present at the time. Since you have asked me, I shall recount the story of Astika exactly as I heard it.

'Astika's father was as powerful and mighty as Prajapati.[1] He was celibate and was always engaged in great austerities. He was controlled in his food and never spilt his semen. He was known by the name of Jaratkaru. He was the chief among mendicants,[2] righteous and rigid in his vows. Once, when he was travelling, he saw his ancestors hanging upside down in a great cave, their feet pointing upwards and their heads down. On seeing them Jaratkaru asked, "Who are you, hanging upside down in this cave, tethered with a rope made of grass that has been eaten away by rats who secretly live in this cave?" The ancestors replied, "We are rishis rigid in our vows, known as the *yayavaras*. O Brahmana! We are descending into the earth because we have no descendants. We only have one descendant known as Jaratkaru. But unfortunate as we are, that unfortunate one has adopted the path of austerities. Therefore, that fool does not think of having a wife so as to get a son. It is for that reason that we are hanging upside down in this cave, because we are decaying. Like sinners, despite having a protector, we are unprotected. O excellent one! Who are you that you are sorrowing for us like a relative? O Brahmana! We wish to know who you are that you are standing before us mourning, though we deserve to be mourned?" Jaratkaru replied, "I am Jaratkaru himself and you are my fathers and grandfathers who have come before me. Tell me what I should do."

'The ancestors said, "For your sake and for us, endeavour your best to have a son so that our lineage can continue. O exalted one! Such is the law. From the fruits of virtuous action and from the stored-up merits of austerities one does not obtain the gains accrued by having a son. Therefore, as we are instructing you, try your best to marry a wife and have a son. O son! You are our recourse and this will bring us the greatest good."

‘Jaratkaru replied, “I have always resolved never to have a wife. But I will take a wife for the sake of your welfare. O ancestors! If I get a girl under my conditions, I will marry her according to the prescribed rites. Her name has to be the same as mine and her relatives have to willingly bestow her on me as a gift. But who will give a wife to a poor man like me? However, I will accept a girl who is given to me as alms. O ancestors! I shall go as far as to marry a wife under these conditions. I shall not act otherwise. O my ancestors! For the sake of relieving you, I shall have offspring from her so that you may attain the eternal state and be happy there.”’

Souti said, ‘The Brahmana who was rigid in his vows thereafter roamed the earth in search of a wife. But he did not get a wife. One day, the Brahmana went into a forest and, remembering the words of his ancestors, thrice begged for a woman in a faint voice. Thereupon, Vasuki[3] appeared and offered his sister to the Brahmana for acceptance. But he did not accept her, because he thought she did not have the same name as his. The great-souled Jaratkaru had intently thought to himself that he would not accept for a wife someone who did not bear the same name as his. Then Jaratkaru, of great austerities and of great wisdom, asked, “O snake! Tell me truthfully, what is your sister’s name?” Vasuki replied, “O Jaratkaru! My younger sister’s name is also Jaratkaru. Given by me, accept this slender-waisted one as your wife. O best of the Brahmanas! Till now, I have protected her for you. Therefore, take her.” O foremost among those who have knowledge of the brahman! In times gone by, the snakes were cursed by their mother[4] that they would be destroyed in Janamejaya’s sacrifice by the one whose charioteer was the wind.[5] It was to pacify this curse that the best of the snakes[6] married his sister to the great-souled rishi of good vows.

‘Accepting her in accordance with the prescribed rites, he[7] had from her a great-souled son named Astika, great-souled and an ascetic and learned in the Vedas and the Vedangas. He looked on all the worlds impartially and removed the fear from his father and mother. Then, after a long time, we have heard that a ruler of men[8] from the Pandava lineage conducted a great sacrifice known as the snake-sacrifice. When the sacrifice for the destruction of the snakes went on, Astika, of great fame, delivered them from the curse. Saving his maternal uncles, relatives and other snakes, he then delivered his ancestors by having a son through his ascetic practices. O Brahmana! He freed himself from their debt through his diverse vows and study of the Vedas. He pleased the gods through sacrifices in which many offerings were made. He pleased the sages through his celibacy and his ancestors through his progeny. Jaratkaru and his grandfathers went to heaven.

‘After a long time, the noble Jaratkaru, best of the sages, had a son named Astika and after following the righteous path, went to heaven. I have narrated the account of Astika as I heard it. O tiger of the Bhrigu lineage! Now tell me, what else should I

narrate?'

14

Shounaka said, 'O Souti! Tell us once again, in detail, the account of the holy and wise Astika. You listen most obediently to what we say. O son! You speak in gentle tones, with the right words and metres. We are very pleased. You speak like your father. Your father was always ready to please us. Therefore, tell us this account, as your father narrated it.'

Souti said, 'O long-lived ones! I shall tell you the story of Astika exactly as I heard it from my father. O Brahmana without sin! Many years ago, in the era of the gods, Prajapati[9] had two fair daughters and these sisters had great beauty. Their names were Kadru and Vinata and they were the wives of Kashyapa. Their husband was like Prajapati and obtaining great happiness from his wives, gave each of them a boon. Hearing that their husband Kashyapa was willing to grant boons, these two beautiful women were transformed from happiness to great joy. Kadru wished to have one thousand nagas as her sons, equal to one another in splendour. Vinata asked for two sons, greater than Kadru's sons in strength, form, energy and valour. Then, her husband granted her the boon of sons she wanted and Kashyapa told Vinata that it would be as she wished. Having got the boon she desired of two greatly powerful sons, Vinata was satisfied and happy. So was Kadru at having obtained the boon of one thousand sons, equal in splendour. "Nurture the embryos with care." Saying this, the great ascetic Kashyapa went away to the forest, leaving his two wives satisfied with their boons.'

Souti said, 'O lord of the Brahmanas! After a long time, Kadru gave birth to one thousand eggs. Vinata gave birth to two eggs. Their happy maidservants kept these separately in steaming vessels and 500 years passed. After 500 years, Kadru's sons emerged from the eggs. But nothing was seen to emerge from Vinata's two eggs. Thereupon, that ascetic lady Vinata, impatient to have a son but ashamed and sorry, broke open one of the eggs and saw her son, with the upper part of the body formed, but the lower part yet unformed. It was then heard that the enraged son cursed his mother. "O mother! Since out of avarice, you broke open this egg and didn't allow my body to be completely developed, you will be enslaved for 500 years by the woman you sought to equal. O mother! Your other illustrious son will set you free from slavery, if you wait patiently and do not break open the egg prematurely and deform his body like you have done mine. If you wish to have a son of unrivalled strength, you must patiently wait for his time of birth, for 500 years." Thus cursing his mother Vinata, the son arose into the sky. O Brahmana! Aruna[10] can be seen in the morning. At the right time, Garuda, the enemy of the nagas, was born. As soon as he was born, he deserted his mother. O tiger of the Bhrigu lineage! Being hungry, the king of the birds rose into the sky to search for the food earmarked for him by the creator.'

## 15

Souti said, 'O great ascetic! At around this time, the two sisters once saw Ucchaihshrava approach towards them. This gem, the best of horses, was worshipped by all the gods when he arose when the ocean was churned for nectar. This horse was supreme, of unsurpassed strength, divine, forever young, wonderful and decorated with all the auspicious marks.'

Shounaka asked, 'Where and how did the gods churn the ocean for nectar, from which you say this powerful and resplendent king of horses arose? Tell me this.'

Souti said, 'There is a supreme mountain named Meru that is blazing with energy. The sun's rays are scattered when they fall on its golden and glowing peaks. Adorned with ornaments of gold and frequented by gods and gandharvas, this is unfathomable and unattainable to those who have committed many sins. Fearful beasts of prey roam its heights and divine herbs illuminate it. That great mountain arises high to cover the vaults of heaven. It cannot be approached through the imagination. It is bedecked with many trees and rivers and it echoes with the beautiful melodies of many birds. It has stood aloft for many eras. It was on this peak's bejewelled and beautiful summit that all the revered gods ascended. Those who had practised austerities and observed vows gathered and held consultations about how they might obtain the ambrosia. When all the gods thought and consulted each other, the god Narayana[11] spoke to Brahma. "The pot of curdled milk[12] must be churned by the gods and the demons together. When that is done, ambrosia and all the herbs and all the jewels will emerge. O gods! Therefore, churn the ocean and you will get the ambrosia."'

## 16

Souti said, 'There is a mountain named Mandara, with soaring peaks that tower like clouds. Adorned with nets of innumerable creepers, echoing with the melodies of many birds and with many fierce-toothed beasts of prey roaming on it, it is frequented by *kinnaras*,[13] apsaras and gods. It rises up 11,000 *yojanas*[14] above and its base extends 11,000 yojanas downwards. Having failed to uproot it, all the gods came to Vishnu and Brahma, who were seated together, and told them, "For the sake of our welfare and intelligence, endeavour to find a means to uproot Mandara." O descendant of the Bhrigu lineage! Both Vishnu and Brahma said, "Let it be that way", and summoned by Brahma and directed by Narayana to perform the task, the powerful Ananta[15] uprooted the king of mountains with all his might, with all the forests and all the beings that lived in the forests. With the mountain,[16] the gods then went to the shores of the ocean and told him, "O ocean! We have come to churn your waters for the sake of the ambrosia." The lord of the rivers replied, "Let it be that way, but give me my share. I shall then be able to bear the great crushing when my waters are churned by Mandara." The gods and the

demons then went to Akupara, the king of the tortoises and said, “You will have to bear the mountain on your back.” Thus addressed, the tortoise offered his back, and using instruments, Indra fixed the mountain on his back.

‘O Brahmana! In days long past, having made Mandara the churning rod and Vasuki the rope, the gods and the demons began to churn the ocean, the treasure house of waters. For the sake of the ambrosia, the *asuras* and the danavas[17] grasped one end of the king of the snakes and the great gods grasped the tail. And Ananta stayed with the revered Narayana and repeatedly raised and lowered the head of the naga. As the naga Vasuki was raised up and down by the gods, black smoke and flaming winds issued from his mouth. From this smoke was created clouds with lightning in them and showers rained down on all the gods, refreshing them when they were tired and fatigued. From the sides of the mountain, flowers showered down and refreshed all the gods and the demons. Tugged by the gods and the demons as they churned the ocean, there arose from Mandara a terrible roar, like deep thunder in the clouds. All kinds of marine creatures were crushed by the great mountain and in hundreds gave up their lives in the salty ocean. Many living beings who dwelt in the underground depths, in the land of Varuna, met their destruction. From the whirling Mandara, great trees crashed against each other, were torn from their roots, and tumbled down, with all the nestling birds. Great fires frequently blazed forth from the friction of trees brushing against each other. The mountain Mandara looked like dark clouds filled with streaks of lightning. It drove out and burnt lions, elephants and many other creatures and killed them all. Then Indra, foremost among the gods, began to pacify the blazing fires that were everywhere by pouring down rain from the clouds. The juices of many herbs and the resins of many large trees flowed into the waters of the ocean and the gods became immortal through the juices of the milk, mixed with extracts of liquid gold, which had the powers of ambrosia. Through those juices and resins, the waters of the ocean now turned into milk and the milk turned into clarified butter, mixed with the best of essences.

‘Then the gods came to where Brahma, the granter of boons, was seated and said, “O Brahma! We are tired out, but the ambrosia has not yet emerged. Unless Narayana helps, *devas*, daityas and nagas have no strength to churn the ocean any more, which has been going on for a long time.” Then Brahma spoke to the god Narayana thus: “O Vishnu! You are the last recourse. Give them divine strength.” Vishnu said, “I grant strength to all those who have devoted themselves to the task. All of you insert Mandara into the pot and turn it around.” Their strength increased on hearing Narayana’s words and together they once more mightily churned the ocean’s milk.

‘Then from the ocean arose the calm, cool and radiant moon, whose light rivalled 100,000 of the sun’s rays. Then from the ghee arose Lakshmi, dressed in pale white; then arose the goddess of wine and the white horse.[18] Then from the ghee arose the celestial jewel *koustubha*, which adorns Narayana’s breast. Directed by Aditya,[19] swift as the

mind, Lakshmi, wine, the moon and the horse followed a path to where the gods were. Then arose the beautiful god Dhanvantari[20] with a white pot in his hand, in which the ambrosia was. Seeing this wonderful sight, the danavas raised a great uproar for the ambrosia, saying, "It is ours." At that, Narayana used illusion to assume the form of a beautiful woman and mixed with the danavas. Then, having lost their senses, their hearts bewitched by the woman, the danavas and the daityas gave the ambrosia to her.'

17

Souti said, 'Then the daityas and the danavas assembled, grasped their best shields and many weapons and rushed at the gods. But the powerful god Lord Vishnu, accompanied by Nara, seized the ambrosia from the chief danavas. Thereupon, in the tumultuous confusion, all the gods received the ambrosia from Vishnu and drank it. When the gods were drinking the much desired ambrosia, a danava named Rahu assumed the form of the god Budha[21] and began to drink it also. For the welfare of the gods, the sun and the moon informed the gods of what had happened when the ambrosia had only reached the danava's throat. Then the great god[22] sliced off his[23] well-adorned head with his weapon, *chakra*,[24] as he was drinking the ambrosia. Then, sliced off by the chakra, the gigantic head of the danava fell down on the ground with thunderous roars. Ever since that day, a great enmity was created between Rahu's head and the sun and the moon and even today, he swallows them both.[25]

'Then the great lord Hari[26] abandoned his unparalleled feminine form and made them tremble by hurling many weapons at them. On the shores of the salty ocean thus began the greatest of terrible battles between the gods and the demons. Thousands of large and sharp spears, sharp-tipped javelins and many other weapons were hurled. Then, wounded by fearful swords, lances and clubs, sliced by discuses, the demons vomited a lot of blood and fell down on the ground. Cut off by sharp-tipped spears, in that terrible battle the heads fell down continuously, like nets of molten gold.[27] Covered with blood on their bodies, the great demons lay dead everywhere, like mountain peaks red with metals. When the sun was tinged with red, thousands of wails rose from everywhere, from those killed by weapons. The roars of those killed in battle, with iron-tipped clubs when at a distance and with blows of fists when close, rose up as if to touch the sky. "Slice down", "pierce them", "chase them", "throw them down", "advance": these terrible words were heard in all directions.

'When this fearful battle was raging, the gods Nara and Narayana entered the battlefield. On seeing the divine bow in the hands of Nara, the great Lord Vishnu thought of his danava-destroying chakra.[28] As soon as it was thought of, *sudarshana chakra*,[29] the scorcher of enemies, as radiant as the sun, terrible to look at and

unwavering in its path, descended from the sky. When it arrived, Achyuta,[30] as bright as the blazing fire and with fearful arms like an elephant's trunk, unleashed with great force that weapon of blazing energy, capable of destroying enemy towns. Then, when the supreme man[31] unleashed with his hand that weapon in battle, like the blazing fire at the time of the destruction of the universe, it swiftly and repeatedly descended everywhere, destroying Diti and Danu's progeny in their thousands. Sometimes it burnt, blazing like fire. Sometimes it struck down demons like the god of death. Sometimes it was in the sky and sometimes it was on the ground, drinking blood in that battle like a malevolent spirit. Then, undeterred in spirit, the mighty demons rose into the sky like dishevelled clouds and troubled the gods by showering mountains on them. Those terror-inspiring mountains, with many trees and flat peaks on them, descended from the sky like masses of clouds, crashing against each other and producing tremendous roars. When warriors shouted and the battle raged everywhere and mountains, with forests on them, began to fall, the earth and all her forests began to tremble.

'Then the great Nara appeared in the terrible battle of the asura masses and using his gold-tipped arrows with feathered shafts darkened the sky and reduced to dust the mountain peaks. Then the mighty demons, harried by the gods and witnessing the fearful sudarshana raging like a flaming fire, entered the earth, while others plunged into the salty waters of the ocean. Having become victorious, the gods respectfully returned Mandara to its place. The clouds, making heaven resound everywhere, returned whence they had come. The gods rejoiced a great deal and returned, keeping the ambrosia in safe custody. For safe-keeping, the killer of Bala[32] and the other gods handed over the vessel containing the ambrosia to Kiriti.'[33]

## 18

Souti said, 'I have told you the story of how the ambrosia was churned out from the ocean. From that, the handsome horse[34] emerged, unparalleled in strength. When Kadru saw this horse, she asked Vinata, "My dear, what is the colour of Ucchaihshrava? Tell me right away." Vinata replied, "Blessed one, the king of horses is white. What colour do you think it is? Tell me what you think and we will have a wager." Kadru said, "O lady of the sweet smiles! I think the horse has a black tail. O beautiful one! Let us have a wager that she whose words are false will become the other one's slave." Thus, having laid a wager that one would be the slave of the other, they returned to their home, resolving to examine the horse the next day.

'Wishing to deceive, Kadru asked her 1000 sons to become like hair as black as collyrium and speedily cover the horse's tail, so that she did not become a slave. When they refused to do what they had been asked, she cursed the snakes and said, "In the snake-sacrifice of the royal and wise sage Janamejaya, of the Pandava lineage,[35] the

fire will consume all of you." The grandfather[36] himself heard this extremely cruel curse uttered by Kadru, and driven by destiny, bearing in mind the welfare of all creatures, since the snakes had greatly multiplied, he[37] and the other gods approved the curse. The snakes had virulent poison, excessive strength and were mighty in prowess. They had a tendency to bite. For the welfare of all creatures, to counter their virulent poison, he bestowed on the great-souled Kashyapa the knowledge of neutralizing poison.'

19

Souti said, 'O you who are rich in austerities! When the night was gone, it was morning and the sun arose. The sisters Kadru and Vinata, having laid a wager on slavery, were impatient and driven by jealousy. They started out to see the horse Ucchaihshrava, who was nearby. On their way, they saw the deep and great ocean, the treasury of the waters, full of fish that swallow whales,[38] crowded with sharks[39] and populated by thousands of other creatures of many forms. No other creatures could approach it, because of the perennial and terrible presence of crocodiles and turtles. It was the source of all jewels. It was the abode of Varuna. It was the beautiful and supreme home of the nagas. It was the lord of all the rivers. It was the home of the subterranean fire, friend to the demons and a terror to all creatures. It was the great reservoir of the waters and never decayed. It was blessed and brought welfare to the gods. It was the source of the ambrosia. It was beyond measure, beyond imagination, sacred and supreme. It was also fearful, with the terrible roars of aquatic creatures making a thunderous noise and full of deep whirlpools. It was a source of fear to all creatures. Buffeted by the winds, with the shoreline changing, heaving up with the agitation and the turbulence, it seemed to dance everywhere, its waves like raised hands. Its waves heaved with changes in the moon. It was the source of the panchajanya.[40] It was the source of the best of jewels.

'In days gone by, it was agitated by Lord Govinda[41] of infinite energy, when he assumed the form of a boar and found the earth at the bottom of the waters. Though he tried for 100 years, the brahmarshi Atri could not find its bottom, lower than the nether regions. At the beginning of every yuga, when Vishnu of infinite energy falls asleep in spiritual meditation, it is the bed of the lotus-navelled.[42] Its waters were the sacrificial offerings in the subterranean fire's blazing flames. It was holy, without limits, vast, beyond measure and the lord of the rivers. They saw the great ocean, with thousands of great rivers rushing towards it with pride, like rivals towards lovers' rendezvous. They saw that it was deep, populated by whales and sharks, thundering with the sounds of other aquatic creatures. They saw it was vast, as extended as the sky, unfathomable and the infinite and great treasury of the waters. When they thus saw the deep ocean, populated with whales, sharks and waves, serene and extended like the sky, shining

with the flames of the subterranean fire, they swiftly passed over it.'

20

Souti said, 'Having crossed the ocean, Kadru of swift speed, accompanied by Vinata, quickly arrived before the horse. Seeing many black hairs stuck to the tail, Kadru made the dejected Vinata her slave. Then, having lost the wager, Vinata became a slave who was stricken by grief.

'Meanwhile, when the time came, Garuda of great energy broke open the egg without his mother's help and emerged. He looked like a mass of blazing fire and was fearful in appearance. As soon as he was born, the bird increased to a gigantic size and rose into the sky. On seeing him, all the beings[43] sought the refuge of Vibhavasu.[44] They bowed down before the god who has a universal form and who was seated on his seat, and addressed him thus. "O Agni! Do not extend your body. Have you decided to burn us? Look, the huge mass of flames is spreading." Agni replied, "O persecutors of the demons! It is not what you think. It is the mighty Garuda, equal to me in energy." Thus addressed, the gods and all the sages approached Garuda and from a distance praised him in these words. "O lord of the birds! You are a rishi. You obtain the greatest share in a sacrifice. You are a god. You are our supreme protector. You are the ocean of strength, you are purity. You are beyond qualities and darkness. You are the possessor of all anger. You cannot be conquered. We have heard that you are the performer of all great acts. You are all that has not been and all that has been. You are the supreme knowledge. Surpassing the rays of the sun, you produce all that is permanent and all that is transient. Darkening the splendour of the sun, you are the destroyer of everything. You are all that perishes and all that does not perish. O god! With the splendour of fire, you consume everything, just as the sun burns all beings in his anger. You are like the terrible fire which destroys everything at the end of a yuga, when all is consumed in the cycle of destruction. O king of the birds! Having come to you, we seek refuge in you. You move in the sky, you have unbounded energy, you are as powerful as the fire. You are the mighty bird Garuda, you reach the clouds. We have approached you. You are the granter of boons and unparalleled in strength." Having been thus praised by the gods and all the sages, Suparna[45] then decreased his energy and his splendour.'

21

Souti said, 'Then that bird, capable of travelling everywhere at will and capable of summoning energy at will, went to his mother's house, on the other side of the ocean. Vinata lived there, tormented by grief, having lost the wager and having become a slave. Some days later, when her son was present, Vinata was summoned by Kadru and when Vinata bowed before her, Kadru said, "Dear Vinata, take me to the beautiful and

lovely abode of the nagas situated in the heart of the ocean.” Then Suparna’s mother took up the mother of the snakes. On his mother’s request, Garuda took the snakes on his back. Vinata’s son, the bird, began to rise up towards the sun and scorched by the rays of the sun, the snakes became unconscious.

‘Seeing the state of her sons, Kadru began to praise Shakra[46] in these words. “O lord of the gods! I bow before you. O slayer of Bala! I bow before you. O slayer of Namuchi! I bow before you. O thousand-eyed husband of Shachi![47] The snakes are being burnt by the rays of the sun. Save them with your showers. You are our supreme protector. O best of the gods! O Purandara![48] You can pour forth water in torrents. You are Vayu,[49] you are the clouds. You are Agni. You are the lightning in the sky. You drive the masses of clouds and therefore you are known as the dense cloud. You are the unparalleled thunder, you are the roaring clouds. You are the creator and the destroyer of all the worlds. You are invincible. You are the light of all beings. You are the sun and the fire. You are supreme knowledge, you are wonderful. You are the king. You are the best of the gods. You are Vishnu, you have one thousand eyes. You are the God and the last refuge. You are the *soma*[50] that is the most worshipped. You are the instants.[51] You are the *tithis*.[52] You are *lava* and you are again *kshana*.[53] You are *shuklapaksha*,[54] you are *krishnapaksha*,[55] you are *kala*,[56] you are *kashtha*[57] and you are also *truti*.[58] You are the year, the seasons, the months, the nights and the days. You are the beautiful earth with its mountains and forests. You are the bright sky with the sun. You are the great ocean and its waves, with whales,[59] creatures that swallow whales,[60] crocodiles[61] and diverse other fish. You are immensely famous. You are always worshipped by the wise, whose intelligence has been awakened, and the maharshis. You are the drinker of the soma juice that is offered at sacrifices with sacred incantations and other offerings. You are always worshipped in sacrifices by Brahmanas who desire the fruits. Your incomparable strength is praised in the Vedas. It is for this reason that the best of the Brahmanas, who are engaged in sacrifices, study the Vedangas with great diligence.”’

## 22

Souti said, ‘Having been thus addressed by Kadru, the illustrious god who rides tawny horses,[62] covered the entire sky with layers of blue clouds. Those clouds, sparkling with lightning, poured down copious quantities of water. As the clouds continued to thunder in the sky, as if at each other, and continuously poured down torrents of water that were welcome, they roared. The sky seemed to madly dance with the wind’s violence, the clap of thunder and the waves of showers. As Vasava[63] poured down this rain, the nagas were overwhelmed with delight. The entire earth was covered everywhere with water.’

23

Souti said, 'Carried by Suparna, they soon came to an island. It was surrounded by the waters of the ocean and echoed with the songs of birds. There were myriad fruits and flowers in the woods that were there. There were beautiful houses and lakes with lotuses. It was adorned with charming lakes that were full of clear water. It was refreshed with pure winds that carried with them divine fragrances. It was radiant with trees that grow on the Malaya mountains.[64] They rose high up in the sky and stirred by the breeze, showered down flowers. It was as if the trees bathed the nagas who lived there with rain in the form of flowers. It was a charming, pleasant and divine place, dear to the gandharvas and the apsaras. Echoing with the sweet melodies of many birds, it delighted Kadru's sons.

'Having arrived in those woods, the *pannagas*[65] enjoyed themselves there. Then they told the immensely valorous Suparna, supreme among birds, "Take us to another beautiful island that has large quantities of water. O bird! You must have seen many enchanting countries when travelling through the sky." Having thought about this, the bird asked his mother Vinata, "O mother! Why must I do what the serpents ask me to?" Vinata replied, "O supreme among birds! I have become the slave of my ignoble sister. The serpents deceived me and made me lose a wager." When his mother told him the reason, the one who travels in the sky[66] grieved.

'He told the serpents, "O serpents! What can I get you? What can I find out for you? What feat of power can I perform? Tell me truly how one can be freed from this state of slavery." Having heard the bird, the serpents asked him to use his energy to bring the *amrita*.[67] That was the way to be freed from slavery.'

24

Souti said, 'When he had heard the words of the snakes, Garuda told his mother, "I am going to get the amrita. But I wish to eat something. Tell me what." Vinata replied, "The *nishadas*[68] have their excellent home in a remote part of the ocean. Eat thousands of nishadas and bring back the amrita. But never set your mind on killing a Brahmana. Among all living beings, a Brahmana is like fire and is never to be killed. When he is angered, a Brahmana is like fire, the sun, poison or a sharp weapon. Among all beings, he is the one who obtains the first share at a sacrifice, is supreme among the varnas and is a father and preceptor."

'Garuda said, "O mother! I am asking you. What are the auspicious signs through which I will recognize a Brahmana? You should tell me." Vinata replied, "O son! If a man goes down your throat torturing you like a swallowed fish hook or burning it like hot coal, know him to be a bull among Brahmanas." Out of the great love she bore for her son, Vinata again repeated the words. Vinata knew her son's valour to be

unparalleled. But she nevertheless pronounced a blessing on him. "Let the Maruts protect your wings. O son! Let the moon protect your back. Let the fire protect your head. Let the sun protect all your body. O son! I shall always be engaged in ceremonies that bring you peace and welfare. O son! Go in safety and accomplish your objective." Having heard his mother's words, the bird then stretched his wings and flew up into the sky.

'The powerful one soon descended hungrily on the nishadas, like Yama himself. Determined to destroy the nishadas, he raised a great storm of dust that covered up the sky. This dried up the water in the ocean and shook the mountains that grew around. The king of birds opened his gigantic mouth and stopped the route of the nishadas. In great alarm, the nishadas also entered the mouth of the eater of snakes. Like frightened birds in a forest that rise in thousands into the sky when there is a great storm, the nishadas were blinded by the dust and in thousands entered the wide open mouth of the giant eater of snakes. Then the hungry bird, with great strength and swift speed, the scorcher of his enemies, closed his mouth. The traveller in the sky killed many nishadas, who depend on diverse fish for a living.'

25

Souti said, 'A Brahmana and his wife had entered his throat and began to burn the bird's throat like a piece of coal. The giant bird said, "O best among the twice-born! Come out of my open mouth quickly. A Brahmana will never be killed by me, even if he is always associated with those who commit sin." When Garuda said this, the Brahmana replied, "My wife is a nishada. Let her come out with me." Garuda said, "Take the nishada with you and come out immediately. Save yourself, before you are digested by the energy in my stomach." Thereupon, the Brahmana emerged with the nishada woman. Praising Garuda, he went to the country where he wished to go. When the Brahmana and his wife emerged, the king of birds, swift as the mind, stretched his wings and rose up into the sky.

'He then saw his father,[69] who asked him about his welfare and he replied, "I have been sent by the snakes to steal the supreme soma. I shall bring it today, to free my mother from her slavery. My mother instructed me to eat the nishadas. But even after eating them in their thousands, my hunger is not yet satisfied. O illustrious one! O lord! Show me some other food that I can eat, so that I am strong enough to steal the amrita."

'Kashyapa said, "In ancient times, there was a maharshi named Vibhavasu. He became angry very easily. He had a younger brother named Supratika,[70] who was a great ascetic. That great sage was unwilling to maintain their wealth jointly with his brother and Supratika always spoke of dividing it. After some time, Vibhavasu told his brother Supratika, 'It is from delusion that many wish to divide common property. Once it has been divided, they are deluded from love of wealth. Ignorant from selfishness,

enmity is created, though there is a disguise of friendship. Others, knowing them estranged in property matters, increase the enmity on other matters and divided relatives meet their downfall. Absolute ruin soon comes to those who are separated. That is the reason why learned ones never approve partition among brothers. When divided, they do not have any respect for the sacred texts or preceptors. O Supratika! You are beyond my control. Disregarding my advice and out of love for riches, you wish for a partition. I curse you that you will become an elephant.' Thus cursed, Supratika told Vibhavasu, 'You will become a tortoise that lives in the water.' Cursed by each other and their minds deluded by desire, they became an elephant and a tortoise, animals of low birth. Boastful of their strengths and sizes, as earlier, they have continued in their vice of enmity towards each other, living in this huge lake. Look at one of them, the large and handsome elephant, come towards this lake now. Hearing his trumpeting, the giant tortoise that lives under water rises out of the lake, agitating its waters. On seeing him, the valorous elephant curls his trunk and rushes into the water, violently moving his tusks, trunk, tail and feet. The water that is full of fishes is agitated. The valorous tortoise also raises its head and comes up to fight. The elephant is six yojanas[71] in height and double that in length. The tortoise is three yojanas in height and ten yojanas in circumference. These two are maddened at the prospect of fighting each other and wish to kill each other. Eat them up and swiftly accomplish the task you wish to perform." Hearing his father's words, the bird swooped down from the sky and swiftly grasped the elephant and the tortoise, one in each claw.

'The bird then flew high up into the sky. It went to the *tirtha*[72] named Alamba and saw many celestial trees there. Struck by the wind raised by his wings, the trees trembled in fear. Those celestial trees had golden branches and were scared that these would be broken. Seeing that the trees bore fruit and shoots capable of granting all desires and that they were quivering in fright, the bird went to other trees, incomparable in colour and shape. Those giant trees had fruit of gold and silver, with branches of lapis lazuli. They were washed by the waters of the ocean.

'A giant sandalwood[73] tree stood there and spoke to the best of the birds, as he was swiftly swooping down with the speed of the mind. "Descend on my giant branch, which extends for one hundred yojanas, and eat the elephant and the tortoise." Then the supreme among the birds, as giant as a mountain, descended swiftly on the tree, shaking the branches that housed a thousand birds, and broke the branch that was full of leaves.'

## 26

Souti said, 'As soon as the tree's branch was touched by the immensely powerful Garuda with his feet, it snapped. He[74] held onto it as it was about to fall. As he wonderingly

gazed at that large branch that had been broken, he saw the *valakhilyas*[75] hanging from it, their heads facing downwards. The lord of birds was scared of killing them and carefully held the branch in his beak and ascended again. Shaking the mountains, the bird slowly circled the sky and while doing this, passed many countries, with the elephant and the tortoise. In his compassion for the valakhilyas, he could find no place to alight on. At last he went to the best of mountains, the indestructible Gandhamadana.

'There he saw his father Kashyapa engaged in austerities. His father also saw the bird of divine form, with energy, valour and strength, swift as the wind and the mind, large as a mountain, like the raised staff of a Brahmana, inconceivable, incapable of description, terrible to all beings, the possessor of the valour of delusion,[76] as radiant as Agni himself, incapable of being vanquished by devas, danavas and rakshasas, capable of splintering mountain peaks, drying up the water of rivers and whirling the worlds, as terrible as Yama himself.

'On seeing him approach and knowing his wishes, the illustrious Kashyapa told him, "O son! Do not commit a rash act, because that can bring sudden pain. The valakhilyas sustain themselves on the sun's rays. If angry, they can scorch you." Therefore, for his son's sake, Kashyapa propitiated the valakhilyas, accomplished performers of austerities. He explained the reason and said, "O performers of austerities! Garuda's endeavour is for the welfare of all creatures. He is trying to perform a great act. Therefore, please give him permission." Having been thus addressed by the illustrious Kashyapa, the valakhilyas gave up the branch and went off to the sacred Himalayas, in search of more austerities.

'When they went away, Vinata's son,[77] the branch still extending his beak, asked his father Kashyapa, "O lord! Where will I discard this branch of the tree? O lord! Tell me of a land where there are no Brahmanas." Kashyapa told him of a mountain that was uninhabited by men, inaccessible and incapable of being penetrated by others even in their thoughts, covered with snow and full of caves. The great bird, Tarkshya,[78] carried the branch, the elephant and the tortoise and swiftly, with the power of his mind, entered the mountain's wide base. A thin leather strap cut out of a hundred skins wouldn't have been long enough to encircle that giant branch the giant bird carried in his flight. Garuda, the lord of all the birds, flew over 100,000 yojanas in the briefest possible time. As if in a moment, he reached the mountain his father had described and released the branch, which fell down with a great roar. On being struck by the wind unleashed by the bird's wings, the king of mountains trembled. As the trees collapsed, they showered down flowers. The peaks of that great mountain, adorned with gold and gems, were shattered on all sides. The falling branch struck many trees with golden flowers and they looked like clouds charged with lightning. Bright as gold, those falling trees mixed with the mountain's minerals and glowed, as if reflecting the red rays of the

sun. The best of birds sat down on the peak of the mountain and ate both the elephant and the tortoise.

'With the speed of the mind, he[79] then arose from the mountain peak. Ominous and fearful portents appeared before the gods. Indra's *vajra* blazed forth in great pain. Meteors that trailed flames and smoke were loosened from the sky and descended. The weapons of vasus, rudras, adityas, saddhyas, maruts and other classes of gods began to fight among themselves. Such things had never occurred earlier, not even during the war between devas and asuras. Meteors showered down in all directions, tumultuous winds thundered and the cloudless sky made a tremendous roar. Even the God of the gods rained showers of blood. Garlands on the necks of the gods faded and the sky's energy withered. Fearful masses of clouds rained down thick showers of blood. The swirling dust darkened the splendour of crowns worn by the gods. Then Shatakratu,[80] with the other gods, was greatly alarmed and frightened. Bewildered at these terrible portents, he asked Brihaspati,[81] "O illustrious one! Why have these terrible portents suddenly arisen? I do not see any enemy who can withstand us in battle." Brihaspati replied, "O Shatakratu! O king of the gods! It is because of your own fault and negligence. Through the power of their austerities, the valakhilyas have created a wonderful being—the bird who is the son of the sage Kashyapa and Vinata. He is powerful and capable of assuming any form at will and is coming to take away the soma. The bird is supreme among the strong and is capable of taking away the soma. He is capable of achieving the impossible." Hearing this, Shakra[82] spoke to the guardians of the amrita, "An immensely valorous and strong bird has decided to take the soma away. I am warning you in advance, so that he doesn't succeed in taking it away by force. Brihaspati has told me that his strength is unparalleled." When they heard these words, the gods were amazed.

'Carefully, they took up positions around the amrita. Shatakratu Indra also stood there, vajra in hand. They wisely clad themselves in wonderful golden armour, expensively adorned with lapis lazuli. They brandished diverse terrible weapons in their thousands, emitting flames, sparks and smoke, the edges and points sharpened—chakras, iron clubs, tridents, battle axes, many sharp spears, spotless swords, maces of terrible forms, weapons most appropriate for their respective bodies. Armed with these radiant weapons and decorated with divine ornaments, the army of gods stood there, their fears pacified. With unparalleled strength, energy and radiance, capable of razing the cities of the asuras and displaying themselves in forms as radiant as the blazing fire, the gods stood there, their minds set upon protecting the amrita. Thus, that supreme battlefield, with the gods and with hundreds and thousands of clubs, looked like another firmament, lit up by the radiant rays of the sun.'

Shounaka asked, 'O suta! What was Indra's fault and how was he negligent? How was Garuda born through the austerities of the valakhilyas? How did Kashyapa, a Brahmana, have the king of the birds as a son? How did he[83] become invincible and indestructible to all creatures? How did the bird have the power to travel anywhere at will and summon up every power at will? If they are recounted in the ancient tales, I would like to know the answers to these questions.'

Souti said, 'O Brahmana! What you wish to know is indeed narrated in the ancient tales. Listen to me, as I briefly recount it to you. Prajapati Kashyapa undertook a sacrifice in order to have a son and it is said that he was helped by the rishis, the gods and the gandharvas. Kashyapa appointed Shakra,[84] the other gods and the valakhilya sages to bring firewood for the sacrifice. Because of his great strength, the lord Shakra picked up firewood that was as large as a mountain and carried it, without any effort at all. On the way, he saw some rishis who were no larger than the joint of a thumb. Together, they carried a single leaf of a *palasha* tree.[85] The ascetics were extremely weak from lack of food and their bodies were lean. A cow's hoof had left a print[86] and this had filled up with water, causing them grief. Vain about his valour, Purandara[87] was amazed at this sight and contemptuously laughing at them swiftly passed over them, stepping over their heads. At this they were angered and began a great act[88] that would bring danger to Shakra. According to the rites, these great sages, rigid in their austerities, poured libations into the sacrificial fire and chanted mantras saying, "The gods will have another Indra, capable of going anywhere at will and capable of summoning up any power at will. He will bring great fear to the present king of the gods. Through the fruits of our austerities, there will be born one, swift as the mind, who will be a hundred times better than Indra in strength and valour." On learning of this, Shatakratu,[89] the king of the gods, was greatly alarmed and sought refuge with Kashyapa, rigid in his vows.

'Hearing everything from the king of the gods, Prajapati Kashyapa went to the valakhilyas and asked them if their act had been successful. The truthful ones replied that it had been. Then Prajapati Kashyapa pacified them and said, "O ones blessed with the power of austerities! The present Indra has been appointed by Brahma as the lord of the three worlds. You are trying to create another Indra. O supreme ones! You should not make Brahma's words false. Nor should I make your intentions false. Let there be another Indra for winged beings, endowed with great strength and valour. Show mercy to the king of the gods who is a supplicant before you." Having been thus addressed by Kashyapa, the valakhilya ascetics saluted Kashyapa, supreme among sages, and said, "O Prajapati! Our act was for the purpose of creating an Indra. It is also something that you wish, because it was meant to bring you a son. Please accept this act and its fruits. Do whatever seems to you to be the best course of action." At that time, the beautiful

and illustrious goddess Dakshayani[90] Vinata desired to have a son.

'Having performed austerities and rites for the birth of a son and bathed, the pure one served her husband. Kashyapa told her, "O goddess! This act of yours will bear fruit and you will obtain what you desire. You will give birth to two valorous sons, lords of the three worlds. Owing to the austerities of the valakhilyas and through my own desire, these sons will be extremely fortunate and will be worshipped in the worlds." Marichi's illustrious son[91] again told her, "Take good care when you bear these auspicious seeds in your womb. One of these will be a valorous bird, the Indra of all winged beings, capable of summoning every power at will and esteemed by the worlds." Pleased, Prajapati[92] then spoke to Shatakratu,[93] "O Purandara! You will have two powerful birds as brothers. They will cause no injury to you. O Shakra! Stop worrying. You will continue to be Indra. But in your arrogance, never insult those who have knowledge of the brahman. Their words are like poison, their anger is fearsome." At these words, Indra's fears were dispelled and he went to his world. Vinata was delighted, because her wishes had been fulfilled. She gave birth to two sons, Aruna and Garuda. Aruna, with the malformed body, became the one who comes before the sun.[94] Garuda was instated as the Indra of the birds. O descendant of the Bhrigu lineage! Now listen to his great deeds.'

## 28

Souti said, 'O best of the twice born! When this turmoil was going on, Garuda, the king of the birds, swiftly came to where the gods were. Having seen his great strength, the gods began to tremble in fear. They even began to attack each other with their weapons. Among those guarding the soma, was Bhouvana,[95] as radiant as the lightning and fire and unparalleled in his great valour. But after an instant's great fight, he lay dead, ripped apart by the beaks, talons and wings of the Indra among birds. Darkening the worlds with a great storm of dust created by his wings, the giant bird overwhelmed the gods, and overcome with that dust, the gods were deluded. Those who were guarding the amrita could not see it because of that dust. Thus, Garuda brought complete turmoil to the world of the gods. He ripped the gods apart with his wings and beak. Then, the god with the thousand eyes[96] commanded Vayu,[97] "O Marut! It is your duty to drive the dust away." Then the mighty Vayu drove the dust away.

'When the darkness had disappeared, the gods attacked the bird. He roared in the sky, like a giant cloud, terrifying all beings. Attacked by the army of the gods, the immensely valorous king of the birds, the destroyer of enemies, rose into the sky, above the heads of the gods. Led by Indra and armoured, they attacked him with many weapons like lances, iron clubs, spears, maces, many sharp swords and chakras as radiant as the sun. Attacked from every side, the king of birds didn't even tremble. Vinata's powerful son

fought a tremendous battle, showing no signs of tiring out. Like the roar of thunder in the sky, Vinata's powerful son attacked the gods from all sides with his wings and breast and scattered them in all directions. Oppressed and mangled by Garuda's beak and talons, a lot of blood flowed from the bodies of the gods and they fled. The saddhyas and gandharvas fled to the east, the vasus and rudras to the south, the adityas to the west and the Nasatyas[98] to the north. They retreated while fighting and looked back repeatedly at the immensely energetic enemy. He fought with the brave Ashvakranda, the bird Renuka, the brave Krathana, the bird Tapana, Uluka, Shvasana, the bird Nimesha, Praruja and Pulina. Vinata's son tore them into pieces with his wings, talons and sharp beak, like the wrathful and enemy-destroying Pinaki[99] at the end of a yuga. Those immensely powerful and energetic warriors, draining showers of blood from their many wounds, looked like dark clouds.

'Thus rendering the gods almost dead, the best of the birds went to where the amrita was and found it surrounded from all sides by fire. The flames of that great raging fire covered up by the entire sky and moved by violent winds seemed to burn up the hot and sharp rays of the sun. The great-souled Garuda thereupon assumed ninety times ninety mouths and drank up with these mouths water from rivers. Returning with great speed and using his wings as a chariot, he quenched the blazing fires with the rivers. Putting out the fires, he adopted a very small form, wishing to enter.'[100]

29

Souti said, 'Assuming the form of a golden body as bright as the rays of the sun, Garuda entered with great force, like a river entering the ocean. He saw a wheel near the amrita, with keen edges and sharp blades, revolving continuously and murderously around it, blazing like the fire and the sun, a fearful instrument skilfully created by the gods to slice down those who wished to steal the soma. The bird saw an entry through this. He made his body very small and in an instant passed through the spokes in the wheel.

'Behind the wheel, he saw two large snakes, standing guard over the amrita. They blazed like flaming fire and their tongues were like lightning. Their power was immense and their faces and their eyes were fiery. They were terrible, angry and always mobile and their eyes had venom in them. Their eyes did not blink and displayed rage. Anyone who was even seen by those two was instantly burnt to ashes. The one with the beautiful feathers[101] instantly flung dust into their eyes and thus making them sightless he attacked them from all directions. Vinata's son, the traveller in the skies, attacked their bodies and at will tore them into shreds. Without any delay, he then went to where the soma was.

'Vinata's powerful son picked up the amrita from where it was. The valorous one flew

up into the sky, in the process shattering the instrument into pieces. The bird soon emerged, grasping the amrita, but without drinking it. He proceeded on his way, not tired at all, making the sun's radiance seem dark.

'Then Vinata's son encountered Vishnu in the sky. Narayana was pleased with him at his act of self-denial and told the bird, "I am the god who grants boons that don't decay." The bird said, "I always wish to remain above you." He again told Narayana, "I wish to be immortal, free from the decay of age, without the amrita." Having received these boons, Vinata's son told Vishnu, "O illustrious one! I wish to grant you a boon too." Krishna[102] asked for the boon that the powerful one should always be his vehicle.[103] The illustrious god Narayana placed the bird on his flagstaff and said, "Thus you will always be above me." The bird agreed.

'As the bird, the enemy of the gods, flew on with the amrita, Indra powerfully struck him with his vajra. Struck by the vajra, Garuda, supreme among those who fly, tauntingly told Indra in a pleasant voice, "I shall respect the rishi from whose bones the vajra has been constructed. O Shatakratu! I shall respect the vajra and you too. I will cast off one of my feathers and you will never be able to find its ends. I have not felt the slightest pain at being struck by your vajra." On seeing that beautiful feather, all the beings were amazed and exclaimed, "Let this bird be called Suparna."[104] On seeing this marvellous act, the thousand-eyed Purandara was surprised and concluded that the bird must be a great being. He said, "O supreme among birds! I wish to know the extreme limits of your incomparable strength. I wish to be your eternal friend."'

30

'Garuda said, "O Purandara! As you wish, let there be friendship between us. But know that my strength is great and hard to bear. O Shatakratu! There is no doubt that the learned do not approve of speaking highly of one's own strength or of praising one's own qualities. O friend! Since we are now friends and since you ask me, I will tell you, though there should never be self-praise without reason. O Shakra! On a single one of my feathers, without any fatigue, I can bear the wide world with its mountains, forests, oceans and even you suspended there, even all the worlds together, with all their mobile and immobile objects. Know this to be my great strength."

'O Shounaka! When the hero said this, the illustrious and prosperous lord, the crowned king of the gods, the bringer of welfare to all beings, said, "Now accept my eternal and supreme friendship. If you do not require the soma, please return the soma to me. Those to whom you give it will always overcome us." Garuda replied, "There is a reason why I am taking the soma away. I will not give the soma to anyone to drink. O god with the thousand eyes! O ruler of the three worlds! When I have put it down, you can immediately pick it up and bring it back." Shakra said, "O you who are born of an egg! Your words please me. O best of the birds! Ask from me any boon that you desire."

Being thus addressed, he remembered Kadru's son and his mother's slavery through deception and said, "O Shakra! I have the power to do what I desire. Yet, I will be a supplicant before you. Let the mighty snakes be my food." The enemy of the danavas agreed and said, "I shall take the soma away when you have put it down." Thereafter, with great speed, Suparna went to his mother.

'In great delight, he told all the snakes, "I have brought you the amrita. I will place it for you on this *kusha* grass. O snakes! Drink it after bathing and purifying yourselves through rites. I have done what you asked me to do. Therefore, as you had promised, let my mother be freed from her slavery at this very instant." The snakes agreed and went off to have their baths. Shakra picked up the amrita and went off to heaven. After bathing and purifying themselves through prayers and rites, the snakes joyfully returned to the place where the soma had been kept, to drink it. But the snakes found that they had been deceived. They began to lick the *darbha* grass on which the soma had been placed. Because of this act, the tongues of the snakes were split in two and became forked. From that day, because of contact with the amrita, the darbha grass became sacred.

'Thereafter, Suparna happily lived in that forest with his mother. He delighted Vinata by eating snakes, being honoured by all birds and always earning fame. Without a doubt, he who hears this story or recites it in an assembly of Brahmanas, will attain heaven, obtaining his share of merit from the glorification of the great-souled lord of the birds.'

31

Shounaka said, 'O, son of a suta! You have told us why the snakes were cursed by their mother. You have told us why Vinata was cursed by her son. You have told us about the boons granted to Kadru and Vinata by their husband. You have given us the names of the two birds who were born from Vinata. O son of a suta! But you have not told us the names of the snakes. We wish to hear their names, at least those who are chief among them.'

Souti said, 'O one who is blessed with the power of austerities! The names of the snakes are many. I will not mention all their names, but only the main ones. Listen. The first one to be born was Shesha and Vasuki came after him. Then Airavata, Takshaka, Karkotaka, Dhananjaya, Kaliya, Maninaga, the snake Apurana, Pinjaraka, Elapatra, Vamana, Nila, Anila, Kalmasha, Shabala, Aryaka, Adika, Shalapotaka, Sumanomukha, Dadhimukha, Vimalapindaka, Apta, Kotanaka, Shankha, Valishikha, Nishthayunaka, Hemaguha, Nahusha, Pingala, Bahyakarna, Hastipada, Mudgarapindaka, Kambala, Ashvatara, Kaliyaka, Vritta, Samvartaka, the two snakes known as Padma, Shankhanaka, Sphandaka, Kshemaka, Pindaraka, Karavira, Pushpadamshtra, Haridraka, Aparajita, Jyotika, Shrivaha, Kauravya, Dhritarashtra,[105] Pushkara,

Shalyaka, Virajas, Subahu, the mighty Shalipinda, Hastibhadra, Pitharaka, Kumuda, Kumudaksha, Tittiri, Halika, Karkara, Akarakara, Mukhara, Konavasana, Kunjara, Kurara, Prabhakara, Kundodara and Mahodara.

'O best of the twice-born! I have told you the names of the chief snakes. Since there are too many names, I have not told you the names of the others. O one blessed with austerities! I believe the progeny and the offspring of the progeny to be innumerable. Therefore, I will not mention them. O one blessed with austerities! There are many thousands, millions[106] and hundreds of millions[107] of snakes in the world. One cannot recount all their numbers.'

32

Shounaka said, 'O son! You have told us about the many valorous and invincible serpents. Now that you have told me about their curse, what did they do after that?'

Souti said, 'The illustrious and greatly famous lord Shesha left Kadru and practised severe austerities. He lived on air and observed rigid vows. He went to Mount Gandhamadana and practised his austerities in Badari, Gokarna, Pushkararanya[108] and the slopes of the Himalayas. He spent his time in these sacred tirthas, always rigid in observing his vows and controlling his senses.

'The grandfather[109] saw him engaged in terrible austerities, a lord with matted hair and dressed in bark, his skin, flesh and muscles dried up. Addressing the ascetic engaged in his austerities and truthful vows, the grandfather said, "O Shesha! What are you doing? Let the welfare of all beings also be in your thoughts. O unblemished one! You are causing pain to all beings through your severe austerities. O Shesha! Tell me what the wish in your heart is." Shesha replied, "My brothers who shared the same womb are wicked of mind. I do not wish to live with them. Please allow me this. Like great enemies, they are always jealous of each other. I am therefore engaged in austerities. I do not wish to see them. O grandfather! They show no kindness for Vinata or her son, though Vinata's son is also our brother. They always show him hatred. So does he. Because of the boon granted by the great-souled Kashyapa, our father, he is much stronger. Therefore, I shall carry on with these austerities until I have shed this body of mine. I will not associate with my brothers, in this life or another."

'When Shesha uttered these words, Brahma said, "O Shesha! I know what all your brothers do. There is a great danger that looms before them because of their mother's offence. O snake! But earlier, I have already provided for an exception. O Shesha! Do not grieve for any of your brothers. Choose whatever boon you wish for from me. I am extremely pleased with you and I wish to grant you a boon. O best of the snakes! It is good that your mind is fixed on dharma. Let your mind be established even more firmly on dharma." Shesha replied, "O divine grandfather! O lord! I ask for the boon that my mind always delight in dharma, in tranquillity and in austerities."

'Brahma said, "O Shesha! I am extremely pleased with your self-denial and desire for tranquillity. For the welfare of all creatures, let the words that you have expressed be fulfilled at my command. O Shesha! This wide earth is very unstable with its mountains and forests, towns, habitations and oceans. Bear it up properly and well, so that it is stable." Shesha replied, "O divine Prajapati! O granter of boons! O lord of the earth! O lord of every being! O lord of the universe! As you command, I will hold the earth steady. Please place it on my head." Brahma said, "O best of the snakes! O Shesha! Go under the earth and she herself will open up a passage for you. By holding up the earth, you will perform an act greatly valued by me." Shesha agreed. The first among the snakes, the first one to be born, entered the passage in the earth and remained there. He carries the goddess earth, encircled by a girdle of oceans, on his head.

'Brahma said, "O Shesha! You are the best of the snakes. You are the god of dharma, because you singly hold up the earth, encircling her with your endless coils. This is no less than what I myself, or the cleaver of Bala,[110] can do." Thus does the powerful snake Ananta[111] always live under the ground, holding up the earth on Lord Brahma's command. Then the grandfather, the illustrious lord who is the foremost among the gods, provided Vinata's son Garuda to Ananta as a helper.'

## 33

Souti said, 'Vasuki, best among snakes, heard about the curse from his mother and wondered about how it might be aborted. He held a consultation with Airavata and all his other brothers, those who were devoted to dharma. Vasuki said, "O unblemished ones! As you know, a curse has been pronounced on all of us. We should have consultations to free ourselves from this curse. There is no curse that does not have a remedy. O snakes! But he who has been cursed by his mother has no remedy. My heart trembles on hearing that this curse was uttered before the immutable, immeasurable and truthful one.[112] Without a doubt, our annihilation is imminent. Otherwise, the immutable lord would have prevented our mother from imposing the curse. Therefore, let us consult now to see how the health of the snakes can be preserved. Let us not waste time. Through our consultations, we may be able to find a means of escape, like in ancient times the gods regained the lost Agni who had hidden himself inside a cave, so that Janamejaya's sacrifice for the destruction of the snakes does not take place or is overcome." Thus addressed, all of Kadru's offspring assembled. They were wise in counsels and put forward their views.

'Some snakes present said, "Let us assume the form of bulls among Brahmanas and beg Janamejaya to call off the sacrifice." Other snakes who believed themselves to be wise said, "All of us will become his best advisers. Without a doubt, he will then ask for our considered opinion on all the rituals and we will render him advice that the sacrifice should be stopped. Thinking us to be extremely wise, the wise king will certainly ask us

about the sacrifice and we will give reasons why it should not be held. We will point out many serious evils, in this world and the next, that will result and show causes and reasons why the sacrifice should not be held. Or if a preceptor, who is known to be devoted to the king's welfare and is well-versed in the rites of a snake-sacrifice, is appointed as the priest, one of us can bite and kill him so that he is dispatched to the land of Yama. If the sacrificial priest is killed, there will be no sacrifice. If other experts in snake-sacrifices are appointed as officiating priests, we will bite them too and our objective will be attained." Some other snakes who were devoted to dharma said, "This advice is not good. It is not proper to kill Brahmanas. Confronted with any danger, ultimate pacification is only possible when the remedy is based on dharma. As we know, *adharma* only destroys the entire world." Other snakes said, "Let us become clouds luminescent with lightning and rain down showers so as to extinguish the sacrificial fire." Other superior snakes said, "Let us go in the night, unobserved by anyone, and steal the ladles for the sacrifice. That will bring an obstruction. Or let the snakes go in their hundreds and thousands to the sacrifice and bite everyone and create a terror. Or let the snakes defile the pure food with their dung and urine, so that all the food is destroyed." Others said, "Let us become officiating priests at the sacrifice and obstruct it by demanding our dakshina[113] at the beginning. Let us overpower the king, so that he does that which we ask him to." Others said, "When the king is sporting in the water, let us carry him home and tie him up, so that the sacrifice is not held." Others, thinking themselves to be virtuous, said, "Let us go to the king and bite him at once, so that our objective is attained. Through his death, the root of all our afflictions will be severed. This is the final result of our wisdom and consultations. O king! If you approve of this, let us proceed immediately."

'Having said all this, they looked at Vasuki, the lord of the snakes. After thinking for a while, Vasuki told the snakes, "O snakes! This final advice of yours is not fit to be carried out. Not a single one of the plans given by the snakes seems right to me. What can I suggest that will be for our welfare? That is the reason I am worried. The credit and the blame for the act will rest on me alone.'

34

Souti said, 'Having heard what all the snakes and Vasuki had to say, Elapatra said, "This sacrifice is certain. The Pandava, King Janamejaya, from whom great terror for us results, is also certain. O king![114] One who is afflicted by destiny can find a remedy in destiny alone. There can be no other recourse. O best of the snakes! The source of our danger is destiny. Therefore, it is only destiny that can be our refuge. Listen to my words. O best of the snakes! When that curse was imposed, I was frightened and climbed up into my mother's lap. O best of the snakes! O immensely radiant lord! From there, I heard the sorrowful gods speak to the grandfather.

'"The gods said, 'O grandfather! O god of the gods! Who but the harsh Kadru, having borne such beloved children, can curse them in this way and in front of you too? O grandfather! And you also approved of her curse. We wish to know why she was not stopped.'

'"Brahma said, 'The snakes have become numerous. They are cruel, terrible in valour and full of poison. Because of the welfare of all other creatures, I did not prevent Kadru. The snakes which are destined to be destroyed are poisonous ones that have a propensity to bite, those that bite for little reason, the mean and evil ones, not snakes that follow dharma. Hear how those snakes can escape from that terrible danger when the time comes. In the line of the Yayavaras, there will be born a great rishi, intelligent, austere and self-controlled, who will be known by the name of Jaratkaru. That Jaratkaru will have a son named Astika, who will also be blessed by the power of austerities. He will bring an end to the sacrifice and snakes who are virtuous will escape.'

'"The gods asked, 'O god! On whom will Jaratkaru, foremost among sages and gifted with great powers of asceticism, beget that great-souled and powerful son?'

'"Brahma said, 'O gods! The powerful one, the best of the Brahmanas, will beget a powerful son on a woman who will have the same name as his own.'"'

'Elapatra said, "The gods agreed with the grandfather that it would happen that way. The gods went away and so did the grandfather God. O Vasuki! I see before me your sister, who bears the name of Jaratkaru. Give her as alms to the rishi of rigid vows when he comes looking for alms, so that this great danger to the snakes may be pacified. I have heard that this is the means of escape."'

## 35

Souti said, 'O best of the twice-born! When the snakes heard Elapatra's words, they were delighted, and applauded. From that day, Vasuki took great care of that maiden Jaratkaru, his sister, and was relieved. Not long after this, all the gods and the asuras churned Varuna's abode.[115] The serpent Vasuki, strongest of the strong, became the rope used for churning. After this work was over, he appeared before the grandfather. The gods and Vasuki told the grandfather, "O illustrious lord! Vasuki is suffering because of the fear of the curse. O God! He desires the welfare of his relatives, but the spike from his mother's curse pierces his heart. Please draw it out. The king of the snakes always does that which is pleasing to us and is our benefactor. O lord of the gods! Please grant him a favour and pacify the fever in his mind."

'Brahma said, "O immortal ones! I have myself mentally thought about what you have said and had earlier inspired the snake Elapatra to utter those words. The time has come. Let the king of the snakes carry out those words. Only the wicked ones will be destroyed, not those who follow the path of dharma. The Brahmana Jaratkaru has been

born and is engaged in austerities. At the appropriate time, let him[116] give away his sister Jaratkaru. O gods! What the snake Elapatra proposed for the welfare of the snakes is true. It cannot be otherwise."'

Souti said, 'On hearing the grandfather's words, the king of the snakes appointed a large number of snakes to keep a continuous watch on Jaratkaru. He said, "When Lord Jaratkaru exhibits the desire for a wife, come immediately and inform me. Our future welfare depends on this."'

36

Shounaka said, 'O son of a suta! I wish to know why the great-souled rishi, whom you have referred to as Jaratkaru, came to be famous by that name on earth. What is the origin of the name Jaratkaru?'

Souti said, '*Jara* means decay and *karu* means gigantic. The sage had a gigantic body, but he decayed it slowly through severe austerities. O Brahmana! It was because of this that he was known as Jaratkaru and Vasuki's sister had the name for similar reasons.'

When he heard this, the virtuous Shounaka smiled and told Ugrashrava[117] that the names were appropriate.

Souti said, 'A great deal of time passed. But the sage of rigid vows, deeply engaged in devout austerities, exhibited no desire for a wife. The great-souled sage roamed the entire earth, engaged in deep studies and controlling his senses, holding back his seed without any signs of fear. Even in his thoughts, he showed no desire for a wife.

'O Brahmana! Once upon a time, there was a king named Parikshit. He was born in the Kuru lineage. Like Pandu, he was mighty-armed and the supreme of archers in battle. He was devoted to hunting, like his great-grandfather[118] in ancient times. That lord of the earth roamed around, hunting deer, wild boar, hyenas, buffaloes and various other wild animals. One day, he pierced a deer with an arrow that had stooping tufts, and slinging his bow over his back, entered the dense forest. Like Lord Rudra searching in heaven for the sacrificial deer that had been pierced, he searched everywhere in the forest, bow in hand. Never had a deer pierced by Pariskhit escaped in the forest alive. However, though wounded by the lord of the earth and the king of men, this deer was soon lost, demonstrating Parikshit's own proximity to heaven. He went far in pursuit. Tired and thirsty, he came upon a hermit in the forest. He was seated in a cowshed and drank the froth that issued from the mouths of calves when they sucked milk.[119] Swiftly hurrying to that sage of rigid vows, the king said, his bow raised, "O Brahmana! I am King Parikshit, the son of Abhimanyu. Have you seen where the deer pierced by me has gone?" Since the sage was under a vow of silence then, he did not reply. At this, the king became angry. He picked up a dead snake with the end of his bow and placed it around his[120] neck. The hermit looked at him, but did not utter a word, good or bad.

On seeing him in that state, the king's anger cooled and he was sorry. Thereupon, he returned to his city and the rishi remained the way he was.

'He[121] had a young son who was blessed with the power of austerities and was extremely powerful. His name was Shringi and he was great in his vows, but given to great anger and difficult to appease. He sometimes worshipped, with great devotion, the supreme god Lord Brahma, engaged in ensuring the welfare of all beings. Once commanded by Brahma, he was returning home. A friend of his jestingly told him about his father. On hearing what had happened, the rishi's son, easily prone to anger and like poison itself, was enraged. O best of the Brahmanas! The friend, Krisha, was also a rishi's son and the two often spent time together. Krisha said, "O Shringi! Do not be too proud. You are an ascetic of great powers. But your father has got a carcass around his shoulders. Sons of rishis like us are successful, have knowledge of the brahman and are immersed in asceticism. But you should keep quiet. Where are your powers, your proud words and your arrogance when you see your father carrying a carcass?"'

37

Souti said, 'When the powerful Shringi, who was easily prone to anger, heard the news that his father was carrying a corpse, he was extremely angry. He looked at Krisha and, abandoning all pleasantness of speech, asked, "Why should my father carry a corpse?" Krisha replied, "O friend! When King Parikshit was roaming around on his hunt today, he placed a dead snake on your father's shoulders." Shringi asked, "What harm had my father done to that evil-souled king? O Krisha! Tell me this and you will witness my ascetic powers."

'Krisha said, "Abhimanyu's son, King Parikshit, was out hunting and wounded a swift deer with a feathered arrow. He chased it alone and the king could not see the deer when he roamed in the wilderness of the great forest. He saw your father and asked him about it. The king was suffering from hunger, thirst and fatigue and repeatedly asked your father about the missing deer. But your father was under a vow of silence. He was immobile and did not reply. Thereupon, the king picked up a dead snake with the end of his bow and placed it on his shoulders. O Shringi! Rigid in his vows, your father is still seated there. However, the king has returned to his city, named after the elephant.[122]"'

Souti said, 'Hearing this, the rishi's son stiffened like a celestial pillar. His eyes reddened with anger and he looked like a blazing fire. Afflicted with rage and powered by the strength of his anger, the powerful one touched the water and cursed the king, "The evil-hearted and vile king, the defiler of Brahmanas and disgrace of the Kuru lineage, who has placed a dead snake on my old and feeble father's shoulders, will, triggered by my words, be taken to the abode of Yama within seven nights from today, bitten by angry Takshaka, the lord of the serpents, and smitten with the swift virulence of his poison." Having thus angrily cursed the king, Shringi went to his father and found

him seated in the cowshed, the dead snake on his shoulders. On seeing the dead snake on his father's shoulders, Shringi was again possessed by anger. Shedding tears of grief, he told his father, "O father! When I heard how the evil-hearted King Parikshit insulted you, I cursed him in anger. That worst of the Kuru lineage deserves such a terrible curse. Within seven days from today, Takshaka, the king of the snakes, will send the evil one to Vaivasvata's[123] abode."

'At that, the father Shamika told his enraged son, "O son! Your act does not bring me pleasure. This is not the dharma for ascetics. We live in the domain of that king and we are righteously protected by him. We should not take note of his evil acts. Ruling kings must always be pardoned by men like us. O son! There is no doubt that if you destroy dharma, it will destroy you. If the king does not protect us, we will suffer from many afflictions. O son! We will then not be able to pursue dharma according to our desires. O son! It is because we are protected by kings, who too know dharma, that we are able to pursue dharma and obtain great merits to which such kings also have a share. Like his great-grandfather, Parikshit protects us, the way a king should protect his subjects. Today, he came here tired, hungry and thirsty and he did not know that I was under a vow of silence and he himself practices austerities. Therefore, you have committed an evil act through childishness. O son! In no way does that king deserve a curse from us."'

38

'Shringi said, "O father! Whether my act was rash and improper, whether it brings you pleasure or displeasure, the words that I have spoken will not be in vain. O father! It can never be otherwise. I tell that I never lie, even in jest, and certainly not in a curse."

'Shamika said, "O son! I know that you are greatly powerful and always truthful. You have not uttered a lie in your life. Therefore, this curse of yours will not be false. But even if he is grown up, a son must be advised by his father, so that he attains all the good qualities and becomes immensely famous. You are yet a child. Therefore, you need advice much more. You are always engaged in austerities and the anger of powerful and great-souled ones increases with their powers. O supreme among those who follow the path of dharma! Seeing that you are my son and witnessing your rashness, I see that I must advise you. Live on whatever food can be obtained from the forest and lead a life of tranquillity. Give up your anger. Otherwise, you will not be able to follow the path of dharma. Anger destroys merits that ascetics obtain after a great deal of pain. There is no hope for those who are deprived of merits. Tranquillity alone gives success to ascetics who are forgiving. Good accrues to the forgiving, in this world and the next. Therefore, you must always control your senses and lead a life that is forgiving. By being forgiving, you will attain worlds that cannot even be reached by Brahma. O son! Having achieved tranquillity, I shall do whatever is in my power. I shall send word to the king that he has been cursed by my son, who is yet immature and whose intelligence isn't fully

developed and who did this in anger, when he couldn't condone the disrespect shown to me."'

Souti said, 'After these instructions, driven by compassion, the great ascetic and rigid observer of vows sent a disciple to King Parikshit. His name was Gouramukha and he was austere in his penances and well behaved. The disciple was instructed to first ask about the king's welfare and then come to the real business. Going there, he swiftly went to the king, the extender of the Kuru lineage. He entered the king's palace, after first having sent notice through servants. The king received the Brahmana Gouramukha with due honour. After resting for a while, he told the king, in the presence of his advisers, Shamika's terrible words,[124] exactly as he had been instructed.

'Gouramukha said, "O lord of kings! A rishi named Shamika lives in your kingdom. He is extremely virtuous, extremely tranquil, a great ascetic and in control of his senses. O tiger among men! He was observing a vow of silence when you used the end of your bow to place a dead snake around his shoulders. He himself forgave the act. But his son did not. O lord of kings! Without his father's knowledge, you have been cursed by him today. In seven nights, Takshaka will be the reason for your death. He[125] repeatedly asked his son to save you, but no one can falsify the curse. O king! Since he has not been able to pacify his angry son, he has therefore sent me to you for your own welfare." Having heard these terrible words, the king, the descendant of the Kuru lineage and a great ascetic himself, remembered his evil act and the king was struck with remorse. Having heard that the great hermit in the forest had been under a vow of silence, the king's remorse increased even more. On learning about the great compassion Shamika had shown for him and recollecting his sinful act towards the hermit, the king was even more miserable. The king did not grieve about his impending death. But like a god, he grieved over the act he had perpetrated. The king then sent Gouramukha away, with the message that the illustrious one[126] should show him mercy.

'When Gouramukha had departed, the anxious king immediately sought the advice of his ministers. Having consulted his advisers, the king, who was wise in counsel himself, instructed that a palace be erected on pillars and guarded day and night. For protection, he placed all around the palace physicians, medicines and Brahmanas who were skilled in the use of mantras. Thus protected on all sides and surrounded by his virtuous ministers, the king continued with his royal duties.

'When the seventh day came, Kashyapa, supreme among Brahmanas, was going with the intention of treating the king, since he possessed that knowledge. He had heard what had happened and that Takshaka, supreme among the snakes, would send the king to Yama's abode. He thought, "I will cure the king of his fever when he has been bitten by the best of snakes. Through this, I will gain wealth and virtue." Takshaka, the king of snakes, saw Kashyapa on the way, single-minded in his desire. He appeared before him in the disguise of an old Brahmana. Then the king of snakes spoke to Kashyapa, a bull

among sages. “Where are you going so swiftly? What is the act you wish to accomplish?” Kashyapa replied, “Today, Takshaka, the best of the snakes, will use his energy to set on fire the invincible King Parkishit of the Kuru lineage. O amiable one! The king of snakes is as powerful as Agni in his energy. I am rushing there today to cure the fever of the king of unlimited energy, who was born in Pandu’s illustrious lineage.”

‘Takshaka said, “O Brahmana! I am that Takshaka, who will set the ruler of the earth on fire. Turn back. You cannot cure someone who has been bitten by me.” Kashyapa replied, “O snake! I will go to the king and cure him of his fever when you have bitten him. That I know. I have the power of intelligence and knowledge.”’

39

‘Takshaka said, “O Kashyapa! If you can cure any creature that has been bitten by me, revive this tree once I have bitten it. O best of the Brahmanas! I will set on fire this fig tree before your very eyes. Try your best and show me the power of the mantras that you have spoken of.”

‘Kashyapa said, “O king of snakes! If that is what you wish, bite the tree. O snake! I shall revive it, once it has been bitten by you.”’

Souti said, ‘Thus addressed by the great-souled Kashyapa, the king of snakes, supreme among snakes, went and bit the fig tree. Bitten by the great-souled snake, the tree imbibed the poison and flared up all around. When he had burnt the tree down, the snake again spoke to Kashyapa. “O best of the Brahmanas! Try your best and give life to this lord of the forest.” The tree had been reduced to ashes from the energy of the king of the snakes. But picking up the ashes, Kashyapa uttered these words. “O king of snakes! Today you will witness the power of my knowledge. O snake! I will revive this lord of the forest in your very presence.” Then the illustrious and learned Kashyapa, supreme among Brahmanas, revived through his learning the tree that had been reduced to a heap of ashes. First, he created a sapling. Then he created two leaves in it. Then he created twigs and branches. Then he regenerated the entire tree.

‘On seeing that the tree had really been revived by the great-souled Kashyapa, Takshaka said, “O Brahmana! It is wonderful that you can destroy my poison or that of others like me. O king of the Brahmanas! O you who are blessed with the power of austerities! Driven by what desire are you going there? I will give you whatever fruits you hope to gain from that best of kings, however difficult they may prove to get. O Brahmana! Your success is uncertain, because that king has been afflicted with a Brahmana’s curse. His life has been shortened. Your blazing fame, that is famous throughout the three worlds, will disappear, like the sun robbed of his splendour.” Kashyapa replied, “O snake! I am going there for riches. O best of the snakes! Give it to me and I will return home.” Takshaka said, “O best of the Brahmanas! I will today give you more riches than you hope to get from the king. Therefore, return.” Having heard

what Takshaka had said, Kashyapa, supreme among Brahmanas, intelligent and with great energy, meditated on the king.

'The powerful Kashyapa then learnt through his divine knowledge that the life of the Pandava king had indeed been shortened. He returned, receiving from Takshaka all the riches that he wanted to possess. At the great-souled Kashyapa's departure, Takshaka hastened towards Hastinapura.[127] On his way, Takshaka heard that the lord of the earth was leading a careful life, protected by mantras and herbs that cured poison. At that, the snake thought to himself, "The king must be deceived through my powers of maya. But what is the best way?" In the disguise of ascetics, Takshaka sent some snakes to the king, with fruits, leaves and water as presents. Takshaka said, "Go swiftly to the king, as if you have a rite to perform. Make the king a present of the fruits, leaves and water." Thus commanded by Takshaka, the snakes did this and took darbha grass, water and fruits to the king. The valorous king of kings accepted their presents. When their rites were performed, he gave them leave to depart.

'When those snakes disguised as ascetics had left, the king addressed his advisers and well-wishers. "All of you eat with me the succulent fruits presented by those ascetics." O Shounaka! As the king was about to eat the fruit with his ministers, a small worm appeared in the fruit that he had picked up. It was tiny, with black eyes, and had the colour of copper. Picking it up, the best of kings told his advisers, "The sun is setting. Today, I no longer have any fear from poison. Therefore, let this worm become Takshaka and bite me. Let the words of the hermit become true and let a falsehood not be committed." Driven by destiny, the advisers applauded him. Having said this, the king of kings smilingly placed the small worm on his throat, about to die and robbed of his senses. He was still laughing when Takshaka, who had come out of the fruit that had been given to the king, coiled around him.'

40

Souti said, 'When the ministers saw their king in Takshaka's coils, their faces paled and they wept in great grief. Hearing his roars, the ministers began to flee. As they were running away in their grief, they saw the wonderful serpent Takshaka, the king of snakes, flying through the sky, like a streak with the colour of a lotus parting heaven's hair. The palace that the king had inhabited was set on fire from the snake's poison and blazed away. In panic, they[128] abandoned it and fled in all directions. The king fell down, as if struck by lightning. When the king was struck down with Takshaka's energy, the royal priest, pure Brahmanas and all the king's advisers performed the funeral rites.

'All the citizens assembled and placed on the throne the king's young son. The people called him Janamejaya, the slayer of enemies and a hero of the Kuru lineage. Though only a child, that best of kings, the eldest of the bulls among the Kurus, was wise. Together with his ministers and priest, he ruled over the kingdom, like his brave great-

grandfather[129] once had.

‘Seeing that the king was now able to burn down his enemies, the king’s ministers went to Suvarnavarman, the king of Kashi, and asked him to give his daughter Vapushtama in marriage. After enquiries, the king of Kashi married Vapushtama to that hero among the Kurus, in accordance with the precepts of dharma. After obtaining her, he[130] was very happy and never gave his heart to any other woman. In pursuit of pleasure, the valorous one, supreme among kings, roamed happily in lakes, blossoming woods and forests, like Pururava[131] did in ancient times, on obtaining Urvashi. Vapushtama, the most beautiful among women, obtained a king of the earth as her handsome husband and at times of pleasure, pleased him with great love.’

## 41

Souti said, ‘At about this time, the great ascetic Jaratkaru roamed the entire earth, having adopted the vow of sleeping at night wherever he happened to find himself in the evening. The immensely energetic hermit roamed around, bathing in the waters of many tirthas, practising vows that those who lack in resolution find impossible to accomplish, abstaining from food and living on air, thus drying up his body from one day to another.

‘He saw his ancestors suspended head downwards in a cave, hanging on to a single strand of grass. Even that single strand was being eaten away by a rat that lived in the cave. Without food, they were lean and in a wretched state, eagerly awaiting their deliverance. Himself in a wretched state, he went to these wretched ones and asked, “Who are you, hanging from this single strand of grass, which becomes weaker as the rat that lives in the cave gnaws at the roots? The rat is slowly biting away the root of the strand still left with its sharp teeth and soon the little that is left of the strand will break. There is no doubt that you will then fall, head downwards, into the cave. Seeing you hang upside down and in this miserable state, I am extremely distressed. How can I help? Quickly tell me if I can prevent this calamity by giving you a quarter, a third or even half of my austerities.[132] Or if you can save yourselves with all my austerities, I am willing to do that. What is best?”

‘The ancestors replied, “O Brahmana! You are old and celibate[133] and you wish to deliver us. O best of Brahmanas! You cannot save us with your austerities. O son! O supreme among eloquent speakers! Our state is the outcome of austerities. We are descending into this hell because of lack of offspring. O son! Hanging in this cave, our knowledge has become dim. Therefore, though you are famous in the worlds because of your manliness, we do not know you. You are old, you have great good fortune and you sorrowfully grieve for us. O Brahmana! Learn who we are and the reason behind the grief. We are rishis named yayavaras, rigid in their vows. We have been cast off from

the holy regions because of lack of offspring. Our sacred austerities have not all been destroyed yet and we have a single strand left. We have a single strand left, but it matters little whether it exists or not. We have bad fortune, or little fortune. We have a single strand in our lineage. He is known as Jaratkaru and he is learned in the Vedas and the Vedangas. He is great-souled, rigid in his vows, a great ascetic and is in control of his senses. But in his greed for austerities, he has reduced us to this state. He has no wife, no son and no relatives. Having lost our senses, that is the reason we are hanging in this cave, like those without protectors. If you meet him, out of kindness for us, tell him that his wretched ancestors are hanging head downwards from a cave. Tell that holy one that he should have a wife and offspring. O Brahmana! O one blessed with the power of austerities! This single strand of grass that you see, the one from which we are hanging, is the strand of our family lineage. O Brahmana! The strands that you see being eaten up, are being eaten up by time. O Brahmana! The half-eaten root from which we are all hanging is the last of our lineage, practising austerities. O Brahmana! The rat that you see is time, immensely powerful. He[134] is slowly killing the misguided Jaratkaru, engaged in austerities, who is greedy for austerities, but has lost his mind and senses. O supreme one! His austerities cannot deliver us. Our roots have been destroyed, we have fallen and our senses have been confounded by time. Look at us descend downwards into hell like sinners. We are descending, with all our earlier ancestors. Severed by time, he too will descend into hell. O son! Austerities, sacrifices and other sacred and great acts are inferior to obtaining offspring. That is the view of the learned. When you see him, tell all this to the ascetic Jaratkaru. O Brahmana! If you wish to be our protector, describe in detail what you have witnessed to him and deliver our message that he should have a wife and offspring."'

42

Souti said, 'Having heard all this, Jaratkaru became extremely miserable with grief. He told his ancestors in a voice that was choked with tears, "I am Jaratkaru, your evil son. I have committed a foolish wrong. Please punish me." The ancestors replied, "O son! O Brahmana! It is fortunate that you have happened to come here. Why have you not taken a wife?" Jaratakaru said, "O ancestors! It has always been my objective to carry my seed inside my body and to take this entire body to the next world. O grandfathers! But having seen you hanging here like birds, my mind has been diverted from a life of celibacy. There is no doubt that I will do that which brings pleasure to you. If I get a lady who bears my own name, who comes to me of her own volition, who comes to me as alms and whom I will not have to maintain, I will accept her as my wife. O ancestors! Otherwise, I will not marry. That is my truthful promise." Having said this to the ancestors, the sage continued to roam the earth. O Shounaka! Though he grew old, he could not find a wife.

‘He was sorry that he was not successful in keeping his promise to his ancestors. He went to the forest and cried out aloud in his grief. “Whatever creatures there are, mobile or immobile, visible or invisible, hear my words. I am a man engaged in severe austerities. But my grief-stricken ancestors told me to have a wife. Instructed by my ancestors and wishing to marry and do what they want, I am now roaming the world, poor and miserable, looking for a maiden as alms. If any of the beings I have addressed has a daughter, please bestow that daughter on me, since I am wandering in all directions. The maiden has to have the same name as mine. She has to be given to me as alms and I should not need to maintain her. I ask for such a maiden.” Thereupon, the snakes who had been appointed to watch over Jaratkaru took this news about his intentions to Vasuki.

‘Hearing this, the king of snakes immediately went to the forest where the hermit was, taking his maiden sister with him, adorned in various ornaments. O Brahmana! Having gone there, Vasuki, the king of snakes, offered the maiden as alms to that great-souled sage. But he did not immediately accept her, thinking that she might not have the same name as his and that the issue of maintaining her remained unsettled. He hesitated and was in two minds about accepting her. O descendant of the Bhrigu lineage! He then asked Vasuki for the maiden’s name and said that he would not support her.’

43

Souti said, ‘Then Vasuki told the rishi Jaratkaru, “This maiden has the same name as yours. She is my sister and is an ascetic. O best of the Brahmanas! I shall support her. O one blessed with the power of austerities! I shall protect her with all my might.” When the snake made the promise that he would maintain his sister, Jaratkaru went to the snake’s house.

‘Thereupon, the aged sage of great vows, best among ascetics, devoted to dharma and learned in mantras, accepted her hand in accordance with the prescribed rites. Worshipped by maharshis, he went with his wife to a beautiful house built by the king of snakes. In that house, there was a beautiful bed covered with unmatched spreads and Jaratkaru slept there with his wife. At that time, the supreme one made an agreement with his wife. “Never do anything or say anything that causes me displeasure. If you ever cause me displeasure, I shall leave you and no longer live in this house. Please remember these words I have spoken.” In great anxiety and great sorrow, the sister of the king of snakes agreed. Wishing to bring pleasure to her husband, the fortunate one served her melancholy husband with the dedication of a white crow.[135]

‘One day, at the time of her season, Vasuki’s sister bathed and following the norms, slept with her husband, the great hermit. She then conceived a child who was like the fire, blessed with the power of austerities and radiant like the god of fire himself. Like the moon in the bright lunar fortnight, the child grew in her womb.

‘A few days later, the immensely famous Jaratkaru fell asleep with his head in his wife’s lap, like a tired person. When the best of Brahmanas was thus sleeping, the setting sun entered the peaks of the mountains. O Brahmana! Vasuki’s excellent sister was frightened at the possible loss of dharma, because the day was coming to an end. “What shall I do now? Should I wake my husband or should I not? He leads a hard life and is devoted to dharma. How can I act so as not to cause him offence? On one side is his anger. On the other, since he lives by dharma, there is the loss of dharma. It seems to me that the loss of dharma is the greater evil. If I wake him, he will certainly be angry. But if the time for evening prayers passes, he will certainly lose dharma.” Having thought this over in her mind, the snake Jaratkaru[136] spoke in a sweet voice to the rishi, asleep like a fire, blazing in his austerities. “O greatly illustrious one! Wake up, the sun is setting. O illustrious one! O one who is rigid in his vows! Touch the water and perform the evening prayers. The fearful and beautiful moment for *agnihotra*[137] has arrived. O lord! Dusk is gradually spreading over the western direction.” Having been thus addressed, the illustrious and great ascetic Jaratkaru told his wife, his lips quivering in anger, “O snake! You have insulted me. I shall no longer live with you. I will go away to the place from where I had come. O lady with the beautiful thighs! If I am asleep, I know for certain that the sun does not have the power to set. No one likes to stay in a place where he has been insulted, let alone those who are like me and are devoted to dharma like me.” Thus addressed by her husband, Jaratkaru’s heart began to tremble.

‘Vasuki’s sister told him, “O Brahmana! I did not wake you with a desire to insult you. I did it so that you should not face a loss in dharma.” But the powerful ascetic Jaratkaru had made up his mind to abandon his wife. Addressed by his wife, the rishi angrily told the snake, “O snake! I have never uttered a lie. Therefore, I have to go. O beautiful one! That was the agreement I had earlier made with you and your brother. O fortunate one! I have passed my time happily with you. O timid one! When I am gone, tell your brother that the illustrious one has left. And when I have departed, please do not grieve for me.” Having been thus addressed, the beautiful Jaratkaru was filled with anxiety and sorrow. Her mouth was dry. Her eyes were full of tears. Her voice choked with sobs. Her heart trembled. But steadying herself, the beautiful one then told her husband Jaratkaru with joined palms, “O you who follow the path of dharma! It is not proper for you to forsake me in this fashion. I am innocent. You are established in dharma. But I am also always established in dharma, doing that which brings you pleasure. O best of Brahmanas! I have not yet accomplished the purpose for which I was given to you. I am unfortunate. What will Vasuki tell me? O supreme one! To save themselves from their mother’s curse, my relatives wanted a son born from me through you. But he is not yet visible. The welfare of my relatives depends on a son obtained through you. O Brahmana! I plead with you that you should not go away until I am fertile through our union and can bring about the welfare of my lineage. O supreme one! Why should a great-souled one like

you abandon an innocent one when the conception is still not apparent?" Thus addressed, the hermit Jaratkaru, blessed with the power of austerities, told his wife words that were fit and appropriate for the occasion. "O fortunate one! The one who is in your womb now will be a rishi who will be like the god of fire himself. He will be the best of those who follow dharma and will be learned in the Vedas and the Vedangas." Having said this, the virtuous and great rishi Jaratkaru went away. His heart was once again firmly fixed on the practice of great austerities.'

44

Souti said, 'O one blessed with the power of austerities! As soon as her husband left, Jaratkaru went to her brother and told him what had happened. The best of the snakes heard this unpleasant news and told his sister, who was more miserable than he was, "O fortunate one! You know what had to be done and why you were given. A son was supposed to be born for the welfare of the snakes. That valorous one was supposed to have saved us from the snake-sacrifice. In ancient times, this is what the grandfather and the gods told me. O fortunate one! Have you conceived through that best of sages? It is my wish that the wise man's marriage should not be fruitless. Without a doubt, it is not appropriate that I should ask you a question on such a subject. But the subject is too serious for me not to ask you. I know that your husband is always engaged in austerities and is prone to anger. I shall not follow him, because he might curse me. O fortunate one! Tell me what your husband has done and thereby pull out the terrible stake that has been implanted for a long time in my heart." Being thus asked, Jaratkaru consoled the tormented Vasuki, king of snakes, and said, "I asked the great-souled and great ascetic about our offspring. He said it is there and left. I do not recollect his ever having spoken a lie, even in jest. O king! Why should he then utter a lie on such a serious subject? He said, 'O snake woman! Do not sorrow over the fruit of your action. A son, resplendent as the fire and the sun, will be born to you.' O brother! Having said this, my husband went away to his hermitage. Let the great distress that preys on your mind be removed." On hearing this, Vasuki, the king of snakes, was delighted and accepted his sister's words.

'The best of the snakes worshipped his sister with kindness, appropriate praise, gifts and homage. O best of the Brahmanas! The immensely radiant embryo grew in her womb like the luminescent sun, like the moon waxing in the sky during shuklapaksha. O Brahmana! At the appropriate time, the snake's sister gave birth to a son who was like a divine child, the destroyer of the fears of his father and mother. He grew up in the house of the king of snakes and studied the Vedas and the Vedangas from the sage Chyavana, the son of Bhrigu. Even as a child, he was strict in adherence to his vows and gifted with intelligence, spirituality and qualities. He became famous in the worlds by the name of Astika. He was known as Astika, because while he was still in his mother's womb, his

father went away to the forest, saying "*asti*".[138] Even as a child, he was extremely intelligent. He was carefully watched over in the house of the king of snakes. He was like the golden and illustrious Lord Shulapani,[139] the lord of the gods. To the great delight of all the snakes, he grew up.'

45

Shounaka asked, 'At that time, what did King Janamejaya ask his ministers about his father's ascent to heaven? Tell me that again in detail.'

Souti replied, 'O Brahmana! Hear what the king asked his ministers and all that they told him about Parikshit's death. Janamejaya said, "You know all that happened to my father and how my greatly illustrious father came about his death. When I have heard all about my father in complete detail from you, I shall learn all that is good and not that which is evil."

'Being asked by the great-souled King Janamejaya, the virtuous and wise ministers replied, "Your father was devoted to dharma, great-souled and a protector of his subjects. Hear how that great-souled one led his life. The four varnas were respectively established in their own dharmas and the king, who was himself well versed with dharma protected them there, in accordance with the dictates of dharma. Illustrious and with infinite might, he protected the goddess earth. He hated no one. Nor did anyone hate him. Like Prajapati himself, he treated all beings impartially. O king! Established in their respective duties, the Brahmanas, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Shudras were protected impartially by the king. He maintained widows, orphans, the disabled and the poor. He was handsome and like another moon to all creatures. Through that truthful and greatly powerful king, everyone was content and blessed with good fortune. The king became Sharadvata's student in the science of weapons.[140] O Janamejaya! Govinda[141] loved your father. He was immensely famous and loved by all the worlds. He was born in Uttara's womb when the Kuru lineage was almost destroyed. Therefore, Soubhadra's[142] powerful son came to be known as Parikshit. The king was learned in royal norms of dharma and artha and had all the qualities. He was in control of his senses and of himself. He was intelligent and was served by those who were wise. He had great wisdom and was completely familiar with the norms of righteous conduct. He had conquered the six vices.[143] Your father protected his subjects for sixty years. His end was preordained, through a snake, and it couldn't be avoided. O best of men! After him, you have lawfully ascended this ancestral kingdom of the Kurus and will rule for 1000 years. O protector of every being! You were instated when you were a child."

'Janamejaya said, "In our lineage, no king has ever been born who did not look after the welfare of his subjects and please them. Consider especially the conduct of my grandfathers,[144] who were always devoted to a great life. How did my father, who was

like them, come to his end? Describe it accurately to me. I wish to hear it."'

Souti said, 'Thus asked by the king, the ministers, who were always engaged in that which brought pleasure to the king, told him everything that had happened. The ministers said, "O king! Your father was always addicted to hunting, like the greatly fortunate warrior and great archer, Pandu. He handed over all matters concerning the running of the kingdom to us. On one occasion, he was roaming in the forest and pierced a deer with an arrow. Having thus shot the deer, he pursued it deep into the forest, alone and on foot, with his sword, quiver and bow ready. But your father could not find that lost deer deep inside the forest. He was sixty years old and aged and felt tired and hungry. He then saw a great sage in that great forest. The lord of kings asked the sage, who at that time was observing a vow of silence and thus the sage did not reply to any of the questions. In his vow of silence, the sage sat motionless and peaceful like a piece of wood, and hungry and thirsty and not knowing that the sage was observing a vow of silence, the king became angry with the sage. Being angry, your father insulted the sage. O best of the Bharata lineage! With the end of his bow, he picked up a dead snake from the ground and placed it around the shoulders of that pure-souled sage. But that wise one did not utter a word, good or bad, and did not become angry. He remained as he was, with the snake around his shoulders."'

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'The ministers said, "O lord of kings! Having placed the snake around the shoulders of the sage, the king, who was weak with hunger, returned to his own city. The rishi had an immensely famous son named Shringi, who had been born from a cow. He was extremely powerful, with great energy and prone to extreme anger. This sage had gone to Brahma to worship him. O tiger of the Kuru lineage! When he was given leave to depart, he was returning and learnt from a friend how your father had insulted his father, how your father had hung a dead snake around his father's shoulders and that he still bore it, though he had done no injury. O king! His father was a great ascetic and supreme among sages. He was pure and had control over his senses and the performer of wonderful deeds. His soul was radiant with the power of his austerities and he had control over all his limbs. His practices were pure and his words were also pure. He was perfectly balanced, without avarice, without pettiness and without jealousy. He was old and he was under a vow of silence. He was the refuge of all beings. Such was the person your father insulted.

'"However, the rishi's son cursed your father in anger. Though he was still a child, he had great energy and the radiance that comes with age. He instantly touched water and, blazing with energy, angrily spoke about your father. 'Look at the power of my austerities. An evil one has left a dead snake around my innocent father's shoulders. Within seven nights from now, the angry and radiant snake Takshaka will burn him

down with the energy of his poison.' Having said this, he went to where his father was. On seeing his father, he told him about the curse he had uttered. That tiger among sages sent a message to your father. 'O lord of the earth! You have been cursed by my son that Takshaka will burn you down with his poison. O king! Be prepared.' O Janamejaya! On hearing this terrible news, your father was alarmed and took every possible precaution against Takshaka, supreme among snakes.

'"When the seventh day arrived, a brahmarshi named Kashyapa was on his way to visit the king. Takshaka, chief among the snakes, saw Kashaypa as he was hurrying, and asked him, 'Where are you going so swiftly? What is it that you want to do?' Kashyapa replied, 'O Brahmana![145] I am going to where King Parikshit, the best of the Kurus, is. Today, he will be killed by the snake Takshaka. I am hurrying there so that I can cure him from his fever. If I protect him, no snake can oppress him.' Takshaka said, 'O Brahmana! Why do you wish to revive the king after I have bitten him? Don't hesitate to tell me what your desire is and I will give it to you. Return home.' When he said he was going there with the desire of acquiring riches, the snake told the great-souled one in pleasant words, 'O, unblemished one! Take from me more riches than you hope to obtain from the king and return.' Thus addressed by the snake, Kashyapa, best among men, obtained as much of riches as he obtained from Takshaka and returned.

'"After the Brahmana returned, Takshaka disguised himself and went to your virtuous father, king and best of kings. He was fully prepared in his palace, but he burnt him with the fire of his poison. O tiger among men! It was after this that you victoriously ascended the throne. O best among kings! Though the account is extremely terrible, we have told you everything in entirety, the way it was seen and heard. O supreme among kings! You have now heard how that great king was destroyed and how the rishi Shamika was insulted. Now do what needs to be done."

'Janamejaya said, "I first wish to hear what was said between Kashyapa and the chief among snakes in that deserted forest. Who witnessed what transpired and how did you hear this? After I have heard this, I will think of a means to destroy the snakes."

'The ministers said, "O king! Listen to how we came to know about the encounter between the chief among the Brahmanas and the chief among the snakes. O lord of the earth! A man had climbed a tall tree, looking for dry twigs that could be used as kindling for a sacrificial fire. Perched on the tree, he was not seen by the Brahmana or the snake. O king! He was also reduced to ashes along with the tree. O lord of kings! The Brahmana's powers revived him, along with the tree. O chief among kings! He later returned to the city and told us the story. What we recounted to you about the encounter between Takshaka and the Brahmana was exactly as it happened and exactly as it was witnessed. O king! O tiger among kings! Now that you have heard it, decide what must be done."'

Souti said, 'On hearing the words of his ministers, King Janamejaya burnt in grief and

wrung his hands. The lotus-eyed king heaved long and deep sighs and wept, tears streaming from his eyes. Struck with deep grief, the lord of the earth said, "I have heard from you the account of my father's ascent to heaven. Now hear from me what my firm decision is. I think no time should be lost in taking action against the evil Takshaka, since he is the one who killed my father. That evil one alone burnt the king and made Shringi's curse come true. If the evil one[146] had gone, my father would surely have been alive. What harm could have come to him[147] had the king been revived through Kashyapa's blessings and the precautions taken by his ministers? It was his delusion that made him prevent Kashyapa, supreme among Brahmanas, from reviving the invincible king. The transgression of the evil Takshaka is a great one. He gave riches to the Brahmana so that he might not revive the king. My father must be avenged, to bring great pleasure to me, Utanka and all of you."'

47

Souti said, 'When the illustrious king uttered these words, the ministers approved and the king took an oath that he would undertake a snake-sacrifice. The lord of the earth, Parikshit's son and the king who was a tiger of the Bharata lineage, then summoned his priest and officiating priests who knew about the sacrifice. He who was eloquent in the uttered words that would make the deed successful said, "I must act against the evil Takshaka who brought violence to my father. Please tell me what I must do. Do you know of an act whereby the snake Takshaka and his relatives can be hurled into the blazing fire? Just as my father was earlier burnt with the poison, I wish to burn that evil snake." The officiating priests replied, "O king! There is a sacrifice that the gods have recommended for those like you. It is known as the snake-sacrifice and it is described in the ancient tales. O lord of men! No one but you can offer this sacrifice. Those who know the ancient tales have told us there is such a sacrifice and we know it." O supreme one! Thus addressed, the rajarshi thought that Takshaka had already been hurled into the mouth of a blazing fire and burnt.

'The king then told the Brahmanas who were learned in the mantras, "I will perform the sacrifice. Collect the required ingredients." O supreme among the Brahmanas! Thereupon the officiating priests, who were hard in their resolve and learned in the shastras, measured out a piece of land as the sacrificial platform, in accordance with the prescribed rites. It was graced by the presence of many learned Brahmanas and adorned with every valuable object, abundant quantities of riches and foodgrains. Before the snake-sacrifice could begin, they then instated the king on this sacrificial platform.

'Earlier, when the sacrificial platform was being built and the sacrifice had not started, a great incident occurred that suggested the sacrifice might be disrupted. There was a man who was a suta. He was an extremely wise builder and one who was skilled in the knowledge of architecture. He was also a raconteur of ancient tales. This bard

said, “The land on which the platform was constructed and the time at which it was measured indicate that this sacrifice will not be completed. A Brahmana will be the cause.” On hearing this, before being instated, the king instructed the door-keeper that no one should be allowed entry without his knowledge.

‘The snake-sacrifice then started according to the prescribed norms. The officiating priests, who were learned in their respective duties, went about prescribed tasks. They dressed themselves in black garments and their eyes became red from the smoke. Chanting mantras, they offered oblations into the sacrificial fire. As they poured oblations into the mouth of the fire and uttered the names of the snakes, the hearts of the snakes trembled in fear. Thereafter, the snakes dropped into the blazing flames, wretched and screaming piteously at each other. They swelled, breathed hard and intertwined their heads and tails. In large numbers, they fell into the blazing fire—white, black, blue, old and young. Crying out terrible screams, they fell into the lofty and blazing flames, in hundreds, thousands, millions and tens of millions. O supreme among Brahmanas! Many snakes perished powerless. Among those which perished, some were small as rats, others large as trunks of elephants, or gigantic and immensely strong like mad elephants. Snakes of many colours, poisonous, terrible, like clubs and with immense strength, fell into the fire in large numbers, as a consequence of their mother’s curse.’

## 48

Shounaka said, ‘At the snake-sacrifice of the wise king Janamejaya of the Pandava lineage, who were the supreme rishis who acted as sacrificial priests? Who were the *sadasyas*[148] at that terrible snake-sacrifice that brought great fear and misery to the snakes? O son! You should describe this in detail. O son of a suta! We should know about those who knew the secrets of the snake-sacrifice.’

Souti said, ‘I shall certainly tell you the names of those wise ones who became *ritvijas*[149] and sadasyas for the king. The hotar was the Brahmana Chandabhargava, who was born in Chyavana’s lineage and was famous as one who was learned in the Vedas. The wise and old Brahmana Koutsarya Jaimini was the udgatar. Sharngarava was the brahman and Bodhapingala was the adhvaryu. Vyasa was a sadasya, together with his sons and disciples—Uddalaka, Shamathaka, Shvetaketu, Panchama, Asita, Devala, Narada, Parvata, Atreya, Kundajathara, the Brahmana Kutighata, Vatysa, the old Shrutashrava who was always engaged in austerities and studying, Kahoda, Devasharma, Moudgalya and Samasourabha. These and many other Brahmanas who were rigid in their vows became sadasyas in Parikshit’s son’s sacrifice.

‘When the officiating priests began to offer oblations into the flames of that great snake-sacrifice, terrible snakes that struck fear into living creatures began to fall into the fire. The fat and the marrow of the snakes thus burnt in the sacrificial fire and

flowed like rivers, creating an intolerable stench as snakes continuously burnt. The screams of snakes that fell into the fire and those which were in the sky and were about to fall in and those that burnt were piteous.

'Meanwhile, as soon as Takshaka, king of snakes, heard that King Janamejaya had been instated in the snake-sacrifice, he went to Purandara's[150] palace. The supreme snake told Purandara everything and confessing the evil that he had done, fearfully sought refuge. Indra was very pleased and told him, "O Takshaka! O king of snakes! You have nothing to fear here from the snake-sacrifice. For your sake, I have already pacified the grandfather.[151] Therefore, you need not be afraid. Drive this fever away from your mind." Thus being reassured, the supreme among the snakes happily lived in Shakra's[152] palace.

'But Vasuki became extremely distressed on seeing that many snakes were continuously falling into the fire and only a few remained in his lineage. Vasuki, supreme among the snakes, was miserable with grief and told his sister with a grieving heart, "O fortunate one! My limbs are burning. I can no longer see the directions. I am about to fall because I have lost consciousness. My mind is whirling. My sight is failing. My heart is about to burst. Completely numbed, I may fall into the blazing fire without resisting. Parikshit's son's sacrifice will go on until he has exterminated our race. It is clear that I must also go to the land of the ancestors. O sister! The time for which I gave you to Jaratkaru has come. O sister! Save us and our race. O supreme among snakes! Astika will send the sacrifice[153] that is being performed. In earlier times, the grandfather himself told me this. O sister! Therefore tell your beloved son, who is learned in the Vedas and respected even by those who are aged, to save me and those who are dependant on me."'

## 49

Souti said, 'At that, the snake woman Jaratkaru called her son and told him what Vasuki, king of the nagas, had told her. "O son! The time has come for attaining the objective for which my brother had given me to your father. Therefore, do what is necessary." Astika said, "Why were you given by my uncle to my father? Tell me in detail, so that I can do what is necessary." Jaratkaru, the sister of the king of snakes, wished to bring about the welfare of her relatives.

'She resolutely told him, "It is said that the mother of all snakes is Kadru. Hear how she came to curse her sons in anger. She said, 'O sons! You have refused to change the colour of Ucchaihshrava, the king of horses, despite my asking and because of the wager, have made me a slave to Vinata. Therefore, the god of fire will burn you in Janamejaya's sacrifice. Thus being reduced to the five elements,[154] you will go to the land of the dead.' The great god, grandfather of all the worlds, himself heard this curse

being uttered and approved. O son! On hearing this curse and the words of the grandfather, Vasuki sought refuge with the gods after the churning of the ocean was over. Once they had obtained their objective and got the supreme amrita, the gods went to Prajapati[155] with their brother[156] leading the way. All the gods and King Vasuki sought to placate the grandfather so that the curse might have no effect. The gods said, 'O lord! Vasuki, the king of snakes, feels sorry for his relatives. How can his mother's curse be rendered ineffective?' Brahma replied, 'Jaratkaru will marry a wife named Jaratkaru. The Brahmana who will be born will save the snakes from the curse.' O god-like son! When Vasuki, the lord of the snakes, heard this, he gave me to your great-souled father, long before this incident.[157] You were born from me and your father. That time has now come and you should save us from the fear. You should save me and my brother from the fire, so that the reason for which I was given to your wise father is not rendered futile. O son! What do you think?" On hearing his mother's words, Astika then agreed.

'He addressed the suffering Vasuki and brought fresh life into him. "O Vasuki! O supreme among snakes! I will save you. I truly tell you that I shall free you from this curse. O snake! Be reassured and banish all fear. O tranquil one! I shall endeavour to bring about your welfare. No one can say that my tongue has ever uttered a lie, even in jest, not to speak of serious occasions. O uncle! I will go to Janamejaya, supreme among kings, now instated in the sacrifice. I shall please him with words that bring him good fortune.[158] O supreme one! The king will then restrain himself from the sacrifice. O king of snakes! O one with great intelligence! Believe all that I say. Believe that what I have resolved is always fulfilled." Vasuki replied, "O Astika! My head is whirling and my heart is splintering. I cannot see the directions and I am oppressed because of the curse[159] of a Brahmana." Astika said, "O supreme among snakes! You should not suffer any more. I shall destroy the fear that comes to you from the blazing fire and the curse of the Brahmana, which has energy like the terrible fire at the time of destruction. You need not fear any more." Then, after having removed the terrible fever from Vasuki's mind and taking it on his own limbs, Astika, supreme among Brahmanas, swiftly went to where Janamejaya's sacrifice, adorned with all the qualities, was being held.

'Having gone there, Astika saw the splendid grounds that had been laid out for the sacrifice, populated with numerous sadasyas, as radiant as the sun and the fire. But the gatekeepers refused to allow entry to that best of Brahmanas. To gain entry, the best of Brahmanas praised the sacrifice.'

## 50

'Astika said, "O son of Parikshit! O best of the Bharata lineage! Soma's sacrifice, Varuna's sacrifice and Prajapati's sacrifice were held in Prayaga in ancient times. But

your sacrifice is in no way inferior to theirs. Blessed be those who are dear to us. O son of Parikshit! O best of the Bharata lineage! Shakra[160] performed one hundred sacrifices. But your sacrifice is equal to one hundred of his. Blessed are those who are dear to us. O son of Parikshit! O best of the Bharata lineage! This sacrifice of yours is like the sacrifices of Yama, Harimedha and King Rantideva. Blessed are those who are dear to us. O son of Parikshit! O best of the Bharata lineage! This sacrifice of yours is like the sacrifices of Gaya, King Shashabindu and King Vaishravana. Blessed are those who are dear to us. O son of Parikshit! O best of the Bharata lineage! This sacrifice of yours is like the sacrifices of Nriga, Ajamida and Dasharatha's son.[161] Blessed are those who are dear to us. O son of Parikshit! O best of the Bharata lineage! This sacrifice of yours is like the sacrifice of King Yudhishthira, who was the son of a god and a descendant of Ajamida and was famous even in heaven. Blessed are those who are dear to us. O son of Parikshit! O best of the Bharata lineage! This sacrifice of yours is like the sacrifice of Satyavati's son, Krishna Dvaipayana,[162] in which he himself was the priest. Blessed are those who are dear to us. Those who are seated here are as radiant as the sun and the fire and make it equal to the sacrifice of Vritra's slayer.[163] There is nothing that they do not know. The gifts given to them are inexhaustible. I am certain that there is no ritvija in all the worlds who is the equal of your ritvija Dvaipayana. His disciples travel the earth, having become ritvijas skilled in their duties. The great-souled god Vibhavasu[164] Chitrabhanu,[165] whose seed is golden, who trails black smoke, who consumes everything and whose head faces the south, is eager for your offerings. In the world of the living, there is no king equal to you in protecting his subjects. My mind is pleased at your perseverance. You are Varuna or Dharmaraja Yama. Like the wielder of the vajra, Shakra[166] himself, you are the protector of all subjects in this world. In my view, in this world, you are the lord of all men. There is no king equal to you in sacrifices. You are like Khatvanga, Nabhaga and Dilipa. You are like Yayati and Mandhata in your power. You are like the sun in your splendour. In the rigidity of your vows, you shine like Bhishma. You are like Valmiki, whose firmness is subtle. You are like Vasishtha in controlling your anger. In my view, your sovereignty is like that of Indra and your radiance is like that of Narayana. You are like Yama in administering dharma. Like Krishna, you have all the qualities. Like the vasus, you are the abode of the goddess of wealth. You are the source of all sacrifices. You are like Dambhodbhava in strength. Learned in the use of arms, you are like Rama.[167] In your energy, you are like Ourva and Trita. Like Bhagiratha, your sight inspires terror."'

Souti said, 'Thus addressed, they were all pleased—the king, the sadasyas, the ritvijas and the fire into which offerings are given. On seeing the expressions they manifested, King Janamejaya spoke.'

'Janamejaya said, "Though he is but a child, he speaks like a wise old man. He is not a child. I think he is wise and old. I wish to grant him a boon. O assembled Brahmanas! Give me the required permission."

'The sadasyas said, "Even though a child, a Brahmana deserves the respect of kings, even more so if he is learned. This child deserves that you grant him his wishes, but not before Takshaka has swiftly come here."'

Souti said, 'The king was willing to grant the Brahmana boy a boon and was about to say, "Ask a boon from me." But the hotar was not pleased at this and said, "Takshaka has not yet come to the sacrifice." Janamejaya said, "Try your best to complete this sacrifice successfully. Use all your powers, so that Takshaka comes here without any more delay. He is the one I hate the most." The ritvijas said, "O king! Takshaka now lives in fear in Indra's palace. The *shastras* reveal this to us and the fire also confirms it." The great-souled suta Lohitaksha was well versed in ancient tales and had known this before. Asked again by the king on this occasion, he said, "O god among men! O king! What the Brahmanas have said is true. I know the ancient accounts and I say that Indra has granted him a boon saying that he should live secretly near him and the fire will not be able to burn him." On hearing this, the king, who had been instated in the sacrifice, was angry and asked the hotar to perform his duties. He chanted mantras and poured oblations into the fire.

'Thereupon, Indra himself arrived there. The great god came in his celestial chariot, worshipped by all the gods surrounding him and followed by masses of clouds and large numbers of *vidyadharas*[168] and apsaras. But the snake[169] hid himself inside Indra's garments. At that, the king, who was determined to destroy Takshaka, angrily spoke to his priests who knew the mantras. "O Brahmanas! If Takshaka is in Indra's palace, hurl him into the fire with Indra himself." The ritvijas said, "O king! Look. Takshaka is coming now and will soon be under your power. His terrible roars and fearful cries can be heard. The snake has been given up by the wielder of the vajra. He has fallen and his body has been disabled through our mantras. Deprived of his consciousness, the king of snakes is falling from the sky. His sharp sighs and deep breaths can be heard. O lord of kings! Your deed is being properly performed. It is now proper for you to grant a boon to this best of Brahmanas." Janamejaya said, "O one who is beyond measure! You are so handsome and so childlike that I wish to grant you a worthy boon. Therefore, ask for the desire that is in your heart. I promise you that I will grant it to you, if it can be granted." Takshaka, the king of snakes, was about to fall into the sacrificial fire in a moment.

'At that very instant, Astika spoke. "O Janamejaya! If you wish to grant me a boon, I wish that this sacrifice should be stopped. Let no more snakes fall down." O Brahmana! At these words, Parikshit's son wasn't happy and told Astika, "O illustrious one! I will

give you gold, silver, cows or whatever else you wish to possess. O Brahmana! I shall give you your boon. But let this sacrifice not be stopped." Astika replied, "O king! I do not ask you for gold, silver or cattle. Let this sacrifice be stopped, so that my mother's relatives are safe." Thus addressed by Astika, Parikshit's son repeatedly told Astika, greatest among eloquent ones, "O supreme among supreme Brahmanas! O fortunate one! O descendant of the Bhrigu lineage! Choose another boon." But he[170] refused. Thereupon, all the sadasyas, who were learned in all the Vedas, unanimously told the king, "Let the Brahmana have his boon."'

52

Shounaka said, 'O son of a suta! I wish to hear the names of all the snakes that fell into the fire at the time of the snake-sacrifice.'

Souti said, 'O you who are learned in the Vedas! There were many thousands, millions and tens of millions. There were so many that I am unable to count them all. As far as I can remember, hear the names of the chief snakes that fell into the sacrificial fire. First, hear the names of the chief ones in Vasuki's family. They had the colours blue, red and white and were of terrible form, with gigantic bodies and virulent poison—Kotika, Manasa, Purna, Saha, Paila, Halisaka, Picchila, Konapa, Chakra, Konavega, Prakalana, Hiranyavaha, Sharana, Kakshaka and Kaladantaka. These are the snakes from Vasuki's lineage that entered the sacrificial fire.

'Now hear the names of those of Takshaka's lineage as I mention them—Pucchandaka, Mandalaka, Pindabhetta, Rabhenaka, Ucchikha, Surasa, Dranga, Balaheda, Virohana, Shili, Shalakara, Muka, Sukumara, Pravepana, Mudgara, Shasharoma, Sumana and Vegavahana. These were the snakes from Takshaka's lineage that entered the sacrificial fire.

'Paravata, Pariyatra, Pandara, Harina, Krisha, Vihanga, Sharabha, Moda, Pramoda and Samhatangada—these are the ones from Airavata's lineage that entered the sacrificial fire.

'O best of Brahmanas! Now hear the names of the snakes born into the Kouravya lineage as I recount them—Aindila, Kundala, Mundo, Veni, Skandha, Kumaraka, Bahuka, Shringavega, Dhurtaka, Pata and Patara.

'O Brahmana! Now hear the names of the snakes born into the Dhritarashtra lineage as I mention them. They were all extremely powerful and swift as the wind, with virulent poison—Shankukarna, Pingalaka, Kutharamukha, Mechaka, Purnangada, Purnamukha, Prahasa, Shakuni, Hari, Amahatha, Komathaka, Shvasana, Manava, Vata, Bhairava, Mundavedanga, Pishanga, Udraparaga, Rishabha, Vegavana, Pindaraka, Mahahanu, Raktanga, Sarvasaranga, Samriddha, Pata, Rakshasa, Varahaka, Varanaka, Sumitra, Chitravedika, Parashara, Tarunaka, Maniskandha and Aruni.

'O Brahmana! I have thus recited the names of only the chief snakes, all famous for

their great deeds. I have not been able to mention all, because there are too many to enumerate. Countless are the numbers of their sons, grandsons and other progeny who fell into the blazing fire. I am unable to mention them. Some had seven heads, some two and some five. They were terrible of form and their poison was like the fire at the time of destruction. They were sacrificed in hundreds and thousands. They had gigantic bodies, great might and were as large as peaks of mountains. Some of them were as extensive as a yojana, others two yojanas long. They were capable of assuming any form at will and of going anywhere at will. Their poison was as virulent as the blazing fire. They were all burnt there at the great sacrifice, oppressed by the Brahmana's curse.'

53

Souti said, 'I have heard that at that time Astika brought about another great miracle. The king who was Parikshit's son was about to grant a boon. The snake,[171] though thrown off from Indra's hand, remained suspended in the air. At that, King Janamejaya became pensive. Although offerings were being poured into the sacrificial fire according to the rituals, the frightened Takshaka did not fall into the flames.'

Shounaka asked, 'O suta! Did those wise Brahmanas not remember the mantras? Why did Takshaka not fall into the fire?'

Souti said, 'When that supreme snake had been cast off from Indra's hand and had lost consciousness, Astika told him thrice, "Stay! Stay! Stay!" Though his heart trembled, he remained suspended in the air, like a man inside a circle. At that, being repeatedly urged by his sadasyas, the king said, "Let it be done as Astika wishes. Let the sacrifice be stopped. Let the snakes be saved. Let Astika be satisfied. Also, let the words of the suta[172] come true." When Astika was granted his boon, a tumultuous roar of joy was heard in the sky. The sacrifice of Parikshit's son, the king of the Pandava dynasty, came to an end. King Janamejaya of the Bharata lineage was pleased and gifted riches in hundreds and thousands to the ritvijas and sadasyas who were assembled there. The lord also gave lots of riches to the suta Lohitaksha, the builder who had predicted at the beginning that the snake-sacrifice would be brought to an end through the action of a Brahmana. Thereafter, in accordance with the prescribed rites, he concluded the sacrifice. Exceedingly pleased, the king honoured Astika and sent him back to his home. The sage was also pleased, because his object had been attained. The king told him, "You must come again and be a sadasya in my great horse-sacrifice." Astika agreed. After performing his unrivalled deed and having pleased the king, Astika was delighted and swiftly returned to his uncle and mother. Touching their feet, he told them in detail all that had transpired.

'Having heard his words, the assembled snakes were extremely delighted with Astika. They were now freed from their worries. They wished to bestow a boon on Astika. All of them repeatedly asked him, "O learned one! O child! What is it that you desire? What

can we do to please you? We are happy that we have now been freed by you. What boon can we grant you?” Astika replied, “Let Brahmanas and other men, who read about this virtuous act of mine with a tranquil mind in the morning and evening, have no reason to fear you.” With cheerful hearts, they told their nephew, “It shall be exactly as you wish. We will happily do what you have asked us to do. He who invokes the immensely famous and truthful Astika, born to Jaratkaru from Jaratkaru, will be protected from snakes. Those who remember Asita, Artimana and Sunitha,[173] during the day or the night, will never face any danger from snakes.” Having thus saved the snakes at the snake-sacrifice, that supreme among Brahmanas, with dharma in his soul, met his destiny at the appointed time. He left behind many sons and grandsons.

‘Thus have I narrated to you Astika’s story, exactly as it occurred. When recounted, this story dispels all fear of snakes. O Brahmana! On hearing this virtuous and blessed account of Astika’s exploits from the beginning, an account that increases one’s store of merit, one has no fear of snakes.’

Shounaka said, ‘O son of a suta! O son! You have narrated to me the great and extensive story of the Bhrigu lineage. I am extremely pleased with you. O son of a suta! I now ask you to recite for me again the wonderful accounts composed by Vyasa, exactly as they were recited by the great-souled sadasyas at the long-extending sacrifice,[174] during intervals at the ceremonies. O son of a suta! O great poet! O learned one! I wish to hear exactly the reasons behind those narrations.’

Souti replied, ‘During intervals at the ceremonies, the Brahmanas spoke about many accounts based on the Vedas. But Vyasa recounted the wonderful and great history known as Bharata.’

Shounaka said, ‘I wish to hear that sacred account known as the Mahabharata, which spread the fame of the Pandavas. Asked by Janamejaya, Krishna Dvaipayana had it properly recited during intervals in the sacrifice. It had its origins in the ocean-like mind of the maharshi of pure deeds. O best of men! O son of a suta! Recite it again to me. I am not satisfied.’

Souti replied, ‘I shall recite from the beginning the great and supreme account of the Mahabharata, as Krishna Dvaipayana conceived it in his mind. O Brahmana! Listen to it. I too derive great pleasure in recounting it.’

# Section Six

## Adi-vamshavatarana Parva

*This parva has 257 shlokas and five chapters.*

*Chapter 54: 24 shlokas*
*Chapter 55: 43 shlokas*
*Chapter 56: 33 shlokas*
*Chapter 57: 106 shlokas*
*Chapter 58: 51 shlokas*

Ansha *means partial or secondary incarnation, while* avatarana *means descent. The parva is thus the descent of partial incarnations. It relates the story of Uparichara Vasu and Vyasadeva's birth from Parashara and Satyavati. It ends with the partial or secondary incarnations of the gods and the demons.*

54

Souti said, 'Hearing that Janamejaya had been instated at the snake-sacrifice, the learned rishi Krishna Dvaipayana went there. The grandfather of the Pandavas was born on an island in the river Yamuna, in the womb of the virgin Kali[1] and from Shakti's son Parashara. As soon as he was born, the sage of great fame developed his body through the power of his will, and mastered the Vedas, the Vedangas and the histories.[2] He achieved that which cannot be surpassed through austerities, study of the Vedas, rites, fasting, having progeny or through sacrifices. The best among those who know the Vedas, first divided the one Veda into four parts. He was a brahmarshi, knower of everything, a wise poet, truthful and pure. That sage of great fame and holy deeds begot Pandu, Dhritarashtra and Vidura in order to continue Shantanu's[3] lineage.

'Accompanied by his disciples, learned in the Vedas and the Vedangas, this great soul entered the sacrificial assembly of rajarshi Janamejaya. There he saw King Janamejaya seated, surrounded by his many sacrificial assistants,[4] like Purandara[5] surrounded by the gods. There were the lords of many countries who had undergone sacrificial baths and skilled officiating priests, the equals of Brahma, seated on the kusha grass laid out at the sacrifice. On seeing the rishi approach, rajarshi Janamejaya, the best of the Bharata lineage, advanced in great delight, with all his companions. With the approval of the sacrificial assistants, the lord offered a golden seat, as did Shakra[6] to Brihaspati.[7] When the granter of boons was seated, worshipped by the *devarshis*,[8] the lord of kings worshipped him according to norms laid down in the sacred texts. Then the king offered his grandfather Krishna[9] water to wash his feet and mouth, oblations and a cow, as laid down in the rituals. Vyasa was delighted and accepted the offerings made by the

Pandava Janamejaya, including the cow.

'Thus having worshipped his great grandfather, bowed before him, and having joyfully seated himself below him, the king asked him about his health. The great lord looked at him and asked him about his welfare. He then worshipped all the sacrificial assistants, who had already worshipped him. Thereupon, with folded hands, Janamejaya and all the sacrificial assistants addressed the best of the Brahmanas. Janamejaya said, "O Brahmana! You witnessed with your own eyes the great deeds of the Kurus and the Pandavas. I wish to hear them narrated by you. What was the reason for the great quarrel between these men of great and virtuous deeds? Why did the great battle, which caused the destruction of beings, take place among my grandfathers,[10] their minds clouded by destiny? O best of the Brahmanas! Tell me the details as they exactly happened." On hearing these words, Krishna Dvaipayana spoke to his disciple Vaishampayana, seated by his side, and said, "Relate in full, exactly as you had heard it from me, the account of the ancient quarrel between the Kurus and the Pandavas." Thereupon, that bull among Brahmanas, instructed by his preceptor, recited in its entirety that old history to the king, the sacrificial assistants and all the assembled kings about the quarrel between the Kurus and the Pandavas and the destruction of the kingdom.'

## 55

'Vaishampayana said, "Bowing down first before my preceptor, with my mind and intellect concentrated and worshipping with devotion, reverence and single-mindedness all the Brahmanas and learned men, I shall now recite in its entirety the account I heard from the great-souled Vyasa, a wise maharshi famous in the three worlds, infinite in his accomplishments. O king! You are a worthy person to hear the history of Bharata. Having received the account from my preceptor, I am delighted to be able to recite it. O king! Hear how the quarrel between the Kurus and the Pandavas occurred. In a desire for the kingdom, hear about the exile[11] as a result of the game of dice. O bull of the Bharata lineage! At your bidding, I shall recount to you how a battle ensued that destroyed the earth. On their father's death, these warriors[12] returned to their home from the forest. In a short while, they became skilled in the art of archery and knowledge of the Vedas. However, the Kurus became envious of the Pandavas, who were all gifted with immense physical strength, beauty and energy, fame and fortune. They were also loved by the citizens.

'"Thereupon, the evil-minded Duryodhana, with Karna and the son of Subala,[13] tried to banish them and oppressed them in various ways. That evil son of Dhritarashtra gave poison to Bhima with his food, but the warrior Vrikodara[14] digested it. One day, the evil one tied the sleeping Vrikodara on the banks of the Ganga and throwing Bhima into

the water went away to the city. But when the son of Kunti woke up, he tore the ropes with which he was tied with his strong arms and Bhima's pains disappeared. While he was asleep, he was bitten everywhere in his body by black snakes with virulent poison, but that destroyer of enemies did not die. However, in all this oppression, the great-souled Vidura was always on guard, to neutralize the evil plans and save them from oppression. As Shakra[15] ensures happiness in heaven and the world of living beings, thus did Vidura always ensure happiness for the Pandavas. When the Pandavas were not killed through all these means, open and hidden, since they were protected by fate and destiny, he[16] consulted his advisers: Vrisha,[17] Duhshasana and the others. With Dhritarashtra's consent, he had a house of lac built. The Pandavas, of unlimited energy, were forced to live there and it was burnt down by fire when they[18] least suspected it. Because of Vidura's warning, a trench was dug and that gave them a wonderful means of escape and they were freed from danger.

'"Later, in a large and terrible forest, Bhima, who had fearsome strength when angered, killed a rakshasa named Hidimba. Then, in complete agreement, those powerful warriors went to the town of Ekachakra and lived there, with their mother, disguised as Brahmanas. Having won Droupadi, they lived there for one year. And having been recognized, those destroyers of foes returned to Hastinapura. King Dhritarashtra and the son[19] of Shantanu then told them, 'Sons, so that conflict doesn't ensue between you and your brothers, we have thought and decided that Khandavaprastha will be your abode. Therefore, give up your resentment and go and live in Khandavaprastha, which has many towns and wide roads.' On hearing these words, they and their friends went to Khandavaprastha, taking many jewels with them. And the sons of Pritha[20] lived there for many years. Through the force of their weapons, they brought many kings under their vassalage. Thus they gradually increased in power, setting store to virtue and the way of truth, not roused by anger, calm and subjugating those who wished to do them harm. The immensely powerful Bhimasena subjugated the east, the brave Arjuna the north, Nakula the west and Sahadeva, the conqueror of brave enemies, the south. Having conquered everything, their kingdom extended over the whole world. With five such sun-like ones and the sun himself extended, the earth seemed to have six suns with the truthful and valorous Pandavas.

'"Then, for some reason, Dharmaraja Yudhishthira sent his brother Dhananjaya[21] to the forest. He lived in the forest for one year and one month. He once went to Hrishikesha[22] in Dvaravati and there obtained as his wife Subhadra, with eyes like the blue lotus, sweet of speech and Vasudeva's younger sister. As Shachi[23]with the great Indra and Shri[24] with Krishna, Subhadra was delighted to be united with Pandu's son, Arjuna. O supreme among kings! Kunti's son and Vasudeva then satisfied Agni by giving

him Khandava[25] to burn. Aided by Keshava, this task wasn't difficult for Bibhatsu Partha, [26] just as when Vishnu sets his mind to destroying enemies, no task is too difficult. Agni gave Partha the supreme of bows, Gandiva, an inexhaustible quiver of arrows and a chariot with a monkey on the standard. It was on that occasion that Bibhatsu freed the great demon Maya. He[27] built the divine assembly hall, adorned with all kinds of jewels and precious stones. Seeing this, the evil-minded and deluded Duryodhana was driven by avarice.

'"Thereupon he deceived Yudhishthira in a game of dice, played by Soubala,[28] and banished him to the forest for twelve years, with an additional year to be spent in disguise, adding up to thirteen years. When in the fourteenth year they[29] returned and claimed their property, they didn't get it. O king! Then war was declared and after destroying all the Kshatriya lineages and killing King Duryodhana, the Pandavas obtained their kingdom back, mostly unpopulated. O great king! This is the ancient history of those whose deeds were everlasting, the account of the conflict, the destruction of the kingdom and the victory."'

56

'Janamejaya said, "O supreme among Brahmanas! You have told me in brief the account known as Mahabharata, containing stories about the great Kurus. O blameless performer of austerities! But I now feel a great desire to hear this wonderful history in detail, with all descriptions. You should therefore recite it in its entirety. I am not satisfied with hearing a brief account of this great story. It cannot be for a trifling reason that the virtuous Pandavas killed those who should not be killed, and yet continue to be praised by men. Why did those tigers among men, despite being innocent and capable of wreaking vengeance on their enemies, suffer the oppressions of those evil ones quietly? O supreme among Brahmanas! Why did Vrikodara, who in his mighty arms had the strength of 10,000[30] elephants, keep his anger under control, despite being oppressed? Why did not the pure Krishna Droupadi, oppressed by the evil sons of Dhritarashtra, burn them with her angry eyes, capable though she was of doing it? Why did those tigers among men, the two sons[31] of Pritha and the two sons of Madri,[32] though oppressed by the evil ones, follow Yudhishthira, addicted to the evil vice of gambling? Why did Yudhishthira, the best among righteous men and the son of Dharma himself, suffer extreme misfortune, though he knew the path of virtuous conduct? Why did Pandu's son Dhananjaya, with Krishna as his charioteer, and capable of dispatching many warriors to the land of the dead with his arrows, suffer so much oppression? O blessed with the power of austerities! Tell me everything that those great warriors did in every situation."

'Vaishampayana said, "I shall recount the entire history, that which was composed by

the great-souled maharshi Vyasa, whose powers are infinite and who is worshipped in all the worlds. This contains 100,000 sacred shlokas, composed by Satyavati's son, Vyasa, of infinite powers. The learned man who recites it to others and also those who hear its recital attain the world of Brahma and become the equals of the gods. This is equal to the Vedas. It is sacred and supreme. It is the best of all that can be heard. It is a purana worshipped by the rishis. It contains all the useful instructions on artha and kama. This immensely sacred history makes the mind desire to attain salvation. The learned man who recites Krishna's[33] Veda to those who are noble, generous, truthful and faithful, will attain great fortune. Even sins like the killing of embryos in wombs are destroyed. On hearing it, the most evil is freed from the most evil of sins. This history, called jaya, should be heard by those who wish to attain victory. On hearing it, a king can bring the entire world under his subjugation and defeat all his enemies. This is the best way to obtain a son and the great path to ensure welfare. It should be heard several times by heirs apparent and their wives.

'"Vyasa, of infinite intelligence, has said that it is the sacred arthashastra and the supreme dharmashastra. It has been said that it is also the great mokshashastra. It is recited in the present time and it will be recited in the future. He who hears it obtains sons, descendants and servants who perform desired acts. He who hears it is immediately freed from all sins committed in body, mind and speech. He who hears the history of Bharata, without finding fault, is freed from all fear of disease, not to speak of fear in the next world. Krishna Dvaipayana, in a desire to bring welfare to the world, composed this to bring wealth, fame, long life, pure deeds and attainment of heaven, spreading in the world the fame of the great-souled Pandavas and other Kshatriyas of immense energy. It is said that this Bharata is the treasury of jewels, like the ocean who is the lord and the great snow-clad mountain.[34] The learned man who recites it to Brahmanas during sacred parvas[35] is cleansed of his sins and becoming victorious over heaven[36] attains union with the eternal brahman. He who causes even a single line from it to be read to Brahmanas at his shraddha makes his shraddha becomes inexhaustible and his ancestors are satisfied with the offerings that are made to them. The sins committed ignorantly by men every day are destroyed on hearing the account of the Mahabharata. It is said that the Mahabharata is the history of the births of the Bharata lineage. He who knows the etymology of this name is freed from all sin. The sage Krishna Dvaipayana arose regularly[37] for three years and composed this wonderful history known as the Mahabharata. O bull among the Bharatas! Whatever is found here on dharma, artha, kama and moksha, may be found elsewhere. But whatever is not in it, cannot be found anywhere else."'

‘Vaishampayana said, “There was a king, a ruler of the earth, always devoted to righteous conduct. His name was Uparichara and he loved hunting. That descendant of the Puru lineage was also named Vasu and, on Indra’s instructions, conquered the beautiful and handsome kingdom of Chedi. After some time, the king gave up the use of weapons and lived in a hermitage, practising austerities. One day, the thunder-wielding god[38] came to him.

“‘Believing that he was trying to become the king of the gods through the practice of austerities, he tried to wean the king away from his austerities. Indra said, ‘O ruler of the world! You should ensure that the path of righteous conduct is not confused. Protect the path of righteous conduct, because that holds up the world. Protect meticulously and rigidly the practice of virtue in the world. If you protect virtue, you will see many other eternal and sacred worlds.[39] Though I am in heaven and you are on earth, you have become a dear friend to me. O ruler of men! Live in that place that is the udder of the earth, stable with animals, flowers, wealth and foodgrains. It has a pleasant climate meant for enjoyment and has all the qualities of the earth and is well protected like heaven. O king of Chedi! Beyond compare on earth, this land is full of wealth, precious stones, other objects and minerals. The citizens in the cities in this land are contented, pious and follow righteous ways. They never indulge in falsehood, not even in jest. The sons there never divide their wealth with their fathers and are engaged in the welfare of their superiors. Thin cows are never yoked to ploughs or carts for carrying goods. O king who gives reason for pride! In Chedi, all the castes are always engaged in their respective duties. Nothing that exists in the three worlds is unknown to you. I shall give you a great and excellent flying chariot,[40] made of crystal and possessed by the gods alone, that is capable of carrying you through the sky. Among all the mortals on earth, you alone, though you possess a physical body, will ride in that best of flying chariots, as if in the form of a god. I shall also give you this garland known as *vaijayanti*,[41] made of lotuses that never fade. If you wear this, you will never be hurt by weapons in battle. O ruler of men! This unparalleled, supreme and great garland, known as Indra’s, will be your distinctive mark.’ The slayer of Vritra also gave a staff made of bamboo to protect the good and the peaceful. After one year was over, the lord of the earth[42] planted this in the earth for the sake of worshipping Shakra. O ruler of the earth! From that day till now, all kings, following the example that was started, plant a bamboo pole in the ground. After that, the kings make it stand upright and decorate it with garlands, perfumes, ornaments and baskets. The worshipping is done in accordance with the rites, with garlands and ornaments, and the god who brings fortune is worshipped in his smiling form, a form he himself adopted out of his love for the great-souled Vasu. On seeing this welfare-granting and god-directed worship done, the great Indra was pleased with Vasu, chief among kings, and said, ‘The men and kings who worship me and

observe my festival like the king of Chedi will gain prosperity and victory, with their kingdoms. Their cities will also expand and will always be full of joy.' O lord of men! Thus did the great-souled and great Maghavan[43] Indra bless the great king Vasu, out of his love for him. Men who observe this festival of Shakra's, with gifts of land and jewels, become pure and are blessed with boons, like Vasu, lord of Chedi and the performer of great sacrifices, was blessed by Maghavan. Ruling Chedi in a righteous way, Vasu, the lord of Chedi, was loved by Indra, and continued with Indra's festival and protected the earth.

'"He had five sons, who had great valour and infinite might. He[44] was a universal emperor and instated his sons in many kingdoms. His famous *maharatha*[45] son Brihadratha was instated in the kingdom of Magadha. Others[46] were Pratyagraha and Kushamba, also known as Manivahana and Macchilla, and Yadu, powerful kings invincible in battle. O king! These were the sons of that rajarshi with unbounded powers. They established kingdoms and cities named after them. Thus, the five kings, sons of Vasu, established separate dynasties that were eternal. When he seated himself or travelled through the sky in the crystal chariot obtained through Indra's grace, the apsaras and the gandharvas worshipped the great king. And he became famous as Uparichara.[47]

'"The river that flowed near his city, Shuktimati, was once attacked by the mountain Kolahola, maddened by lust.[48] The mountain Kolahola was kicked by Vasu with his foot and the river flowed out freely through the gully caused by the kick. From the embrace of the mountain, the river gave birth to twins and, grateful, the river gave them to the king. Vasu, supreme among rajarshis and the provider of prosperity and vanquisher of enemies, made the son the general of his army.

'"The daughter of the river was named Girika and the king[49] made her his wife. Once, the time for intercourse arrived and Vasu's wife, Girika, having purified herself by bathing at the fertile time, informed her husband about her state. But on that very day, his ancestors came to him and asked the best of kings and wisest of men to kill some deer. Thinking that the command of his ancestors should be followed, he went out to hunt, thinking of Girika, who was exceedingly beautiful and like Shri[50] herself. He was so excited that the semen was discharged in the beautiful forest and wishing to save it, the king of the earth collected it in the leaf of a tree. The lord thought that his semen should not be wasted in vain and that his wife's fertile period should not pass barren. Then the king thought about this many times and the best of kings firmly decided that his semen would be productive, since the semen was issued when his queen's time was right. Learned in the subtleties of dharma and artha, the king consecrated the semen, which was productive for producing progeny, and addressed a hawk that was seated nearby. 'O amiable one! Please take this seed to my wife Girika. She is in her season

now.' The swift hawk took it from him and flew speedily through the sky.

'"When the bird was thus swiftly flying through the sky, another hawk saw him and thought that the hawk was carrying some meat and flew at him. The two birds fought with their beaks in the sky. When they were thus fighting, the semen fell into the waters of the river Yamuna. An apsara known by the name of Adrika lived in the water of the Yamuna as a fish, because she had been cursed by Brahma. In the form of a fish, Adrika speedily came to where Vasu's semen fell from the hawk's claw and swallowed it up immediately. O best of the Bharata lineage! Some time after this, the fish was caught by fishermen and she was in her tenth month.[51] From the stomach of the fish there emerged twins in human form, a boy and a girl. They[52] marvelled at this and went and told the king, 'O king! These two have been born in human form inside a fish.' Then King Uparichara accepted the male child and he later became the righteous and truthful king named Matsya. As soon as the children were born, the apsara was also immediately freed from her curse. The beautiful one had earlier been told by the illustrious god[53] that she would be freed from her non-human form when she gave birth to two human children. Following these words, after giving birth to two children and after being killed by the fishermen, she left the form of a fish and assumed her own divine form. The beautiful apsara then went up to the sky, following the path of the *siddhas*,[54] rishis and *charanas*.[55] The girl, the daughter of the fish, smelt of fish. She was given by the king to the fishermen, saying that she would be their daughter.

'"This girl was called Satyavati. She was possessed of great beauty and had every quality and character. But because she lived among fishermen, that sweet-smiling girl carried the smell of fish for a long time. Wishing to serve her father, she plied a boat on the water. One day, when going on a pilgrimage, Parashara saw her. She was extremely beautiful and an object of desire even to siddhas. As soon as the wise one saw the beautiful one, the best of the sages wanted to make love to Vasu's daughter. She told him, 'O holy hermit! The rishis are standing on both banks of the river. How can we have intercourse when they are looking at us?' Thus addressed by her, the great lord[56] created a fog so that the entire place seemed to be covered in darkness. On witnessing this sudden creation of fog by the great rishi, the girl was surprised and overcome with modesty. Satyavati spiritedly said, 'O great lord! Know me to be a virgin and under my father's protection. O unblemished one! My virginity will be sullied if I unite with you. O best of the Brahmanas! If my virginity is lost, how will I be able to return home? O wise one! I will not be able to stay at home. O great lord! Bear this in mind and then do what is proper.' The best of the rishis was very pleased at her words and replied, 'Even after you do that which pleases me, you will remain a virgin. O beautiful, but timid one! Ask me for any boon that you desire. O one with beautiful smiles! My boon has never proven to be fruitless.' Having been thus addressed, she asked for the boon that her body

might always have sweet scents. The great lord granted her what her heart desired. Then, having obtained the boon, she was extremely happy. The one adorned with all the charms of a woman had intercourse with that rishi of wonderful deeds. Thereafter, she became known on earth as Gandhavati.[57] Men on earth could smell her fragrance from the distance of one yojana and after that, she was also known as Yojanagandha.

'"The great lord Parashara went on to his own home. And Satyavati was extremely happy to have obtained this matchless boon. On that very day, she conceived as a result of the intercourse with Parashara and gave birth to Parashara's immensely powerful son on an island in the Yamuna. With his mother's permission, he decided to adopt a life of asceticism and went away, saying that he would instantly appear before her whenever she remembered him for any specific act. Thus was Dvaipayana born in Satyavati's womb through Parashara. Because he was born on an island, he came to be known as Dvaipayana. Knowing that dharma loses one leg at the end of every yuga[58] and that human life expectancy on earth and strength follow the pattern of the yugas, and moved by his desire to please Brahma and the Brahmanas, the learned one divided the Vedas. Thus, he came to be known as Vyasa.[59] The greatest lord and granter of boons then taught the Vedas and the fifth Veda Mahabharata to Sumantu, Jaimini, Paila, his own son Shuka and his disciple Vaishampayana. Separately through them the Bharata Samhita became manifest. Then, Bhishma, of great valour and great fame, successor to Shantanu, was born in Ganga's womb through the semen of the Vasus.

'"There was a great and famous ancient rishi known as Animandavya. Though not a thief, he was suspected of being a thief and was impaled on a stake. Thereupon, the ancient maharshi summoned Dharma[60] and addressed him in these words. 'In my childhood, I pierced a locust[61] with a blade of grass. O Dharma! I remember that sin of mine. But I cannot remember any other. Since then, I have practised austerities a thousand times. Have not these great austerities neutralized a single sin? The killing of a Brahmana is more heinous than the killing of all other beings. O Dharma! Because of your sin,[62] you will be born in the womb of a Shudra.' Being thus cursed, Dharma was born in the womb of a Shudra in the form of Vidura, learned, righteous and pure of body. From Gavalgana, Sanjaya,[63] who was like a sage, was born as a suta.

'"Karna, of great strength, was born from Surya when Kunti was still a virgin. He emerged from his mother's womb with natural armour[64] and a face adorned with earrings.[65]

'"Vishnu himself, worshipped by all the worlds, appeared in Devaki through Vasudeva, for the welfare of the world. He is of great fame, the god without beginning and without end, the lord and creator of the universe, unmanifest, without decay, the brahman, the chief, without any attributes, the great soul, eternal, nature, the lord who

controls, the prime being, the creator of the universe, the source of the sattva quality, perennial, without deterioration, infinite, incapable of being moved, the god who is the supreme soul, Lord Narayana, the upholder, perpetual, the supreme one without decay. This prime being, with infinite wealth and the lord and grandfather of all beings, took his birth in the lineage of the Andhakas and the Vrishnis in order to increase righteousness in the world.

'"The great warriors Satyaki and Kritavarma, skilled in the use of weapons and well versed in the use of all arms, always obedient to Narayana, were born from Satyaka and Hridika, as experts in use of weapons. The spilt semen of maharshi Bharadvaja, great in the practice of austerities, was kept in a vessel. There it grew and from that was born Drona. Goutama's semen fell on a clump of reeds and from that were born twins, Kripa[66] of immense strength and Ashvatthama's mother.[67] Ashvatthama was born from Drona, blessed with the boon of knowing all weapons. From the sacrificial fire was then born Dhrishtadyumna, as radiant as the fire itself. The mighty hero was born with a bow in his hand, for Drona's destruction. From the sacrificial altar was born Krishna,[68] beautiful and radiant. She had a fascinating body and shone with supreme beauty. Then were born Prahlada's disciples, Nagnajit and Subala. Subala had a son named Shakuni. Through the curse of the gods, the son of the king of Gandhara[69] became the enemy of virtue and a destroyer of beings. The other[70] became Duryodhana's mother. Both[71] were skilled in material pursuits.

'"In Vichitravirya's field, from Krishna Dvaipayana, were born Dhritarashtra, lord of men, and also Pandu, of immense strength. Through his two wives, from Pandu, were born five separate sons, the equals of the gods. Yudhishthira was the first-born, the eldest, born from Dharma. Vrikodara was born from Maruta.[72] The best of all, blessed with the boon of knowing all weapons, was Dhananjaya, born from Indra. From the Ashvins were born the handsome twins Nakula and Sahadeva, always devoted to serving their superiors. One hundred sons were born to the wise Dhritarashtra—Duryodhana and the others and the inter-caste Yuyutsu.[73]

'"From Arjuna, Abhimanyu, the great-souled Pandu's grandson, was born to Subhadra, Vasudeva's sister. From the five Pandavas, five sons were born to Krishna,[74] handsome and skilled in the usage of all weapons—Prativindhya from Yudhishthira, Sutasoma from Vrikodara, Shrutakirti from Arjuna, Shatanika from Nakula and the mighty Shrutasena[75] from Sahadeva. From Bhima, Hidimba gave birth to Ghatotkacha in the forest. Drupada[76] had a daughter named Shikhandi, but later, she was transformed into a son. For the sake of her welfare, she was transformed into a man by the *yaksha* Sthuna. At that great battle of the Kurus, hundreds of thousands of kings assembled, eager to fight with each other. Their names are so many that I cannot recount them, for

it would take many years. I have only mentioned the principal ones who figure in this account.”’

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‘Janamejaya said, “O Brahmana! You have mentioned some and others you have not. I wish to hear in detail the accounts of all the radiant kings. O man of good fortune! Why were these great warriors, the equals of the gods, born on earth? Tell me in detail.”

‘Vaishampayana said, “O king! We have heard that what you ask is unknown even to the gods. However, after paying my respects to Brahma, I shall tell you that. In ancient times, after destroying the Kshatriyas on earth twenty-one times, Jamadagni’s son[77] went to Mahendra, supreme among mountains, and began to practise austerities. O king! When the world was thus bereft of Kshatriyas by the one of the Bhrigu lineage, Kshatriya women used to come to Brahmanas to fill their wombs. O tiger among men! Brahmanas who were rigid in observance of their vows had intercourse with them during their productive periods, not out of lust, nor when they were not in season. O king! Thus, thousands of Kshatriya women conceived and gave birth to many Kshatriyas of great power, boys as well as girls, so that the Kshatriya race might thrive. Thus the Kshatriya race originated from Kshatriya women through the ascetic Brahmanas.

‘“This new generation had long lives and prospered through righteous conduct. The four castes were again established, with Brahmanas at the head. At that time, every man went to his wife only when she was in season, nor for lust, nor when she was not in season. O bull of the Bharata lineage! All other beings, even those that were not human, also went to their wives at the right season. Thus they prospered in a righteous way and lived for hundreds and thousands of years. O ruler of the earth! All subjects faithfully followed dharma and the right rituals. All men were free from sorrow and disease. O king, you who have the gait of an elephant! Kshatriyas once again governed the wide earth, with the mountains, forests and groves, with the ocean as the boundary. When the earth was again governed righteously by the Kshatriyas, the other castes, with Brahmanas at their head, were filled with immense joy. All the rulers of men were freed from the sins of lust and anger and, punishing righteously those who deserved to be punished, they protected their subjects. On seeing that the Kshatriyas followed dharma, the one with thousand eyes and performer of a hundred sacrifices[78] poured down sweet rain at the right time and the right place, so that subjects prospered. O ruler of men! No child died then. No one knew a woman before attaining the right age. O best of the Bharata lineage! Right up to the shores of the ocean, the earth was full of people who lived for a long time. Kshatriyas performed great sacrifices in which a lot of alms were given. The Brahmanas studied the Vedas, the Vedangas and the Upanishads. O king! At that time, no Brahmana sold the knowledge of the brahman. Nor were the Vedas recited in the hearing of Shudras. The Vaishyas were engaged in farming and tilled the earth

well with cattle, never yoking cows to ploughs and taking care of the lean ones. Men did not milk cows whose calves were still drinking the froth. No seller sold goods with false scales. O tiger among men! Men thus performed all acts with their eyes on dharma and followed the righteous path in every way. O ruler of men! Men of all castes followed the respective duties of their own castes. O tiger among men! At that time, there was no decline from the path of dharma. O bull of the Bharata lineage! Both women and cows gave birth at the right time. Trees bore flowers and fruit in the right seasons. O king! With Krita Yuga having thus arrived successfully at that time, the entire earth was filled with many beings.

'"O bull of the Bharata lineage and lord of men! When the world was in such a flourishing state, the asuras began to take birth in royal dynasties. Having been often defeated in battle by the gods, the sons of Diti were dislodged from heaven and their prosperity, and began to take birth on earth. O lord of kings! Wishing to attain divinity in the world of men, the powerful demons took birth as different beings—cows, horses, asses, camels, buffaloes, predatory beasts, elephants and deer. O ruler of the earth! On account of those that were already born and those that were being born, the earth was no longer capable of supporting herself. Some of Diti and Danu's offspring, dislodged from heaven, took birth as kings on earth, powerful and insolent. With great valour and strength, they covered the earth in many forms. Crushing their enemies, they oppressed the earth, right up to the shores of the ocean. They began to oppress the Brahmanas, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas and the Shudras. They persecuted all other creatures with their power. O king! Terrorizing and killing all the myriad beings, they roamed over the earth in their hundreds and thousands. Devoid of righteousness and drunk with the power of their valour and strength, they even regularly persecuted the maharshis in their hermitages.

'"O ruler of the earth! Oppressed by the great asuras, who were swollen because of valour, power and strength, the earth approached Brahma. O king! At that time, invaded by the strength of the danavas, the wind, the mountain or the serpent[79] could no longer support the earth. O ruler of the earth! Therefore, the earth, frightened and overburdened, sought refuge with the god who is the grandfather of all beings. She saw the great and eternal god Brahma, the creator of the worlds, seated, surrounded by gods, Brahmanas and maharshis. Gandharvas and apsaras were engaged in divine tasks, worshipping him through hymns and chants. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! In the presence of all the rulers of the worlds, the earth saluted him and sought refuge, narrating all that had happened. But the reason for the earth's arrival was already known to the omniscient self-creator who dwells high above and is the source of matter. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! He is the creator of the world. How could he not know what was in the minds of all beings, including the gods and the demons?

'"O great king! The source of all beings, Prajapati, Isha, Shambhu, the lord of the

earth, spoke to earth. 'O Vasundhara![80] So as to accomplish the task for which you have come to me, I will appoint all those who live in heaven.' O king! Having thus addressed the earth, the god Brahma bid her farewell, and then the creator of all beings commanded the gods. 'So as to free earth from this burden, all of you go and ensure parts of you are born on earth and seek the conflicts[81] you want.' Then the great lord summoned the hosts of gandharvas and apsaras and spoke to them these supreme words: 'Go and ensure that parts of you are born on earth in the forms that please you.' On hearing these words of the foremost among the gods, words that were appropriate and full of meaning, all the gods, with Shakra[82] at their head, accepted them. Impatient to go to earth and be born there in their respective parts, they went to Vaikuntha, to Narayana, the wielder of the chakra and the *gada*,[83] he who is dressed in yellow, he who is radiant white, he who destroys the enemies of the gods, he who has the lotus on his navel and he whose eyes are soft, wide and sloped downwards. For the purification of the earth, Indra told the supreme of beings, 'Please incarnate yourself.' Hari[84] replied that thus it would be."'

# Section Seven

# Sambhava Parva

*This parva comprises 2394 shlokas and sixty-five chapters.*

*Chapter 59: 54 shlokas*
*Chapter 60: 69 shlokas*
*Chapter 61: 102 shlokas*
*Chapter 62: 14 shlokas*
*Chapter 63: 26 shlokas*
*Chapter 64: 42 shlokas*
*Chapter 65: 42 shlokas*
*Chapter 66: 17 shlokas*
*Chapter 67: 33 shlokas*
*Chapter 68: 80 shlokas*
*Chapter 69: 51 shlokas*
*Chapter 70: 46 shlokas*
*Chapter 71: 58 shlokas*
*Chapter 72: 23 shlokas*
*Chapter 73: 36 shlokas*
*Chapter 74: 12 shlokas*
*Chapter 75: 25 shlokas*
*Chapter 76: 35 shlokas*
*Chapter 77: 27 shlokas*
*Chapter 78: 41 shlokas*
*Chapter 79: 30 shlokas*
*Chapter 80: 27 shlokas*
*Chapter 81: 16 shlokas*
*Chapter 82: 13 shlokas*
*Chapter 83: 13 shlokas*
*Chapter 84: 21 shlokas*
*Chapter 85: 27 shlokas*
*Chapter 86: 17 shlokas*
*Chapter 87: 18 shlokas*
*Chapter 88: 26 shlokas*
*Chapter 89: 55 shlokas*
*Chapter 90: 96 shlokas*
*Chapter 91: 22 shlokas*
*Chapter 92: 55 shlokas*
*Chapter 93: 46 shlokas*
*Chapter 94: 94 shlokas*
*Chapter 95: 14 shlokas*
*Chapter 96: 59 shlokas*
*Chapter 97: 26 shlokas*
*Chapter 98: 33 shlokas*
*Chapter 99: 49 shlokas*
*Chapter 100: 30 shlokas*
*Chapter 101: 28 shlokas*
*Chapter 102: 23 shlokas*

*Chapter 103: 17 shlokas*
*Chapter 104: 21 shlokas*
*Chapter 105: 27 shlokas*
*Chapter 106: 14 shlokas*
*Chapter 107: 37 shlokas*
*Chapter 108: 18 shlokas*
*Chapter 109: 31 shlokas*
*Chapter 110: 45 shlokas*
*Chapter 111: 36 shlokas*
*Chapter 112: 34 shlokas*
*Chapter 113: 43 shlokas*
*Chapter 114: 66 shlokas*
*Chapter 115: 28 shlokas*
*Chapter 116: 31 shlokas*
*Chapter 117: 33 shlokas*
*Chapter 118: 30 shlokas*
*Chapter 119: 43 shlokas*
*Chapter 120: 21 shlokas*
*Chapter 121: 23 shlokas*
*Chapter 122: 47 shlokas*
*Chapter 123: 78 shlokas*

*The word* sambhava *means what can originate or be in existence. Hence, this parva is about the origins of the core story. It is one of the longest parvas.*

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Vaishampayana said, 'Thereupon, Narayana and Indra agreed that, together with the gods, they would descend from heaven and be born on earth in their respective parts. Having instructed the gods, Shakra[1] returned from Narayana's abode. One after another, for the destruction of the enemies of the gods and for the welfare of all the worlds, the dwellers of heaven took birth on earth. O tiger among kings! Thereupon, as it pleased them, the gods took birth in the dynasties of the rajarshis and the *maharshis*. They killed the danavas, the rakshasas, the gandharvas, the nagas and other creatures that killed men, in great numbers. O best of the Bharata lineage! The danavas, the rakshasas, the gandharvas and the nagas could not kill the gods. Because, even when they were infants, they were strong.'

Janamejaya said, 'I wish to hear accounts of the births of gods, danavas, gandharvas, apsaras, men, yakshas, rakshasas and other beings, from the beginning and in detail. You know everything. Please tell me.' Vaishampayana replied, 'Bowing down to the god who creates himself,[2] I shall narrate to you the origins and end of the worlds of the gods and other beings.'

Vaishampayana said, 'Through the powers of his mind, Brahma had six sons[3]—Marichi, Atri, Angiras, Pulastya, Pulaha and Kratu. Marichi's son was Kashyapa and all beings were born from Kashyapa. Daksha had thirteen daughters who were illustrious. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Daksha's daughters[4] were Aditi, Diti, Danu, Kala,

Anayu, Simhika, Muni, Krodha, Prava, Arishta, Vinata, Kapila and Kadru. The sons and grandsons of these daughters were immensely powerful and infinite in number.

'O descendant of the Bharata lineage! From Aditi were born the twelve *adityas*, the rulers of the worlds. I shall now mention their names to you—Dhata, Mitra, Aryamana, Shakra, Varuna, Amsha, Bhaga, Vivasvana and Pusha. In the tenth place was Savita, the eleventh was Tvashta and the twelfth was Vishnu. However, the youngest surpassed all the other adityas in qualities.

'It is heard that Diti had only one son, named Hiranyakashipu. But he had five great-souled sons and their names were famous. Prahlada was the eldest, followed by Samhrada. After that was Anuhrada. And after him, Shibi and Bashkala. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Three sons of Prahlada are known everywhere—Virochana, Kumbha and Nikumbha. Virochana had one son, the immensely powerful Bali. Bali in turn had a son, the great asura named Bana.

'O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Danu's forty sons are known everywhere. The first one was the famous king Viprachitti. In addition, one knows of Shambara, Namuchi, Puloman, Asiloman, Keshi, the danava Durjaya, Ayahshira, Ashvashira, the valorous Ashvashanku, Gaganamurdhana, Vegavan, Ketuman, Svarbhanu, Ashva, Ashvapati, Vrishaparva, Ajaka, Ashvagriva, Sukshma, the great asura Tuhundu, Isripa, Ekachakra, Virupaksha, Hara, Ahara, Nichandra, Nikumbha, Kupatha, Kapatha, Sharabha, Shalabha, Surya and Chandrama. Thus is recited the names of the famous danavas in Danu's lineage. The gods Surya[5] and Chandrama[6] are different. O great king! Besides these, ten other immensely powerful and great danavas are known as Danu's sons—Ekaksha, the valorous Mritapa, Pralamba, Naraka, Vatapi, Shatrutapana, the great asura Shatha, Gavishtha, Danayu and the danava Dirghajihva. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Their sons and grandsons were innumerable.

'Simhika gave birth to a son named Rahu, the persecutor of the sun and the moon, and to three others—Suchandra, Chandraharta and Chandravimardana. The numerous sons and grandsons of Krodha were as cruel as she herself was. That line was the performer of evil and cruel deeds, oppressing their enemies. Anayu had four sons, the best among the asuras—Vikshara, Bala, Vira and the great asura Vritra. Kala's sons were like Yama himself, immensely famous on earth, great danavas who were powerful oppressors of their enemies and of great valour—Vinashana, Krodha, Krodhahanta and Krodhashatru. It is heard that Kala also had other sons, including those known as the *kaleyas*.

'Shukra, the son of a rishi, was the great preceptor of the asuras. The famous Shukra Ushanas[7] had four sons, who were also officiating priests for the asuras. Their names were Tvashtavara and Atri and two others who knew about the incantations of mantras. In energy, they were like the sun and they always tried to influence Brahma's world. Thus I have narrated to you, as I heard it in the ancient tales, the origins of the

dynasties of the gods and the powerful and strong demons. O ruler of the earth! Their progeny were so many and multiplied so much that I cannot count them.

'Tarkshya,[8] Arishtanemi, Garuda, Aruna, Aruni and Varuni are known as the sons of Vinata. Shesha, Ananta, Vasuki, the serpent Takshaka, Kurma and Kulika are known as the sons of Kadru.

'O king! Bhimasena, Ugrasena, Suparna, Varuna, Gopati, Dhritarashtra, Suryavarcha the seventh, Pattravan, Arkaparna, the famous Prayuta, Bhima, Chitraratha, all famous and learned in all matters, Shalishira, Pradyumna the fourteenth, Kali the fifteenth and Narada the sixteenth, these divine gandharvas are known as the sons of Muni.

'O descendant of the Bharata lineage! I shall now recount to you many other beings—Anavadya, Anuvasha, Anuranuna, Priya, Anupa, Subhaga and Bhasi were born to Prava, while Siddha, Purna, Barhi, the famous Purnayu, Brahmachari, Ratiguna, the seventh Suparna, Vishvavasu, Bhanu and the tenth Suchandra, these divine gandharvas are also known as the sons of Prava. It is also known that in times long past, the lady of good fortune known as Prava, through a devarshi,[9] gave birth to the race of apsaras with holy qualities—Alambusha, Mishrakeshi, Vidyutparna, Tulanagha, Aruna, Rakshita, the lovely Rambha, Asita, Subahu, Suvrata, Subhuja and Supriya. Atibahu, and the famous Haha and Huhu and Tumbura—these four are known as the supreme among gandharvas.[10]

'The ancient accounts tell us that the ambrosia, the Brahmanas, cattle, gandharvas and apsaras were the progeny of Kapila.[11] Thus, I have recounted to you the origins and exact numbers of all beings, including the gandharvas, the apsaras, the serpents, Suparna, the rudras, the maruts, cattle and the fortunate Brahmanas who perform holy deeds. This history brings long life, is sacred, and is worthy of being heard and is also worthy of praise. It should always be heard and recited to others in the right frame of mind. He who reads this account of the origins of great souls with proper rites and in the presence of gods and Brahmanas, obtains progeny, good fortune, prosperity, fame and a beautiful outcome after death.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'It is known that Brahma gave birth to six maharshis through the powers of his mind. Sthanu[12] had eleven great sons through the powers of his mind—Mrigavyadha, Sarva, the famous Nirriti, Aja, Ekapada, Pinaki the destroyer of enemies, Dahana, Ishvara, the greatly radiant Kapali, Sthanu and the great lord Bhaga. These are known as the eleven rudras. The powerful maharshis Marichi, Angiras, Atri, Pulastya, Pulaha and Kratu are Brahma's six sons. It is well known in all the worlds that Angiras had three sons, Brihaspati, Utathya and Samvarta, all of whom were rigid in their vows. O ruler of men! It has been heard that the sons of Atri were many. They were all

maharshis, learned in the Vedas, tranquil in their souls and attained salvation. From Pulastya were born the rakshasas, the monkeys and the kinnaras.[13] From Pulaha were born the deer, the lions, the tigers and the *kimpurushas*.[14] The sons of Kratu were the equals of Kratu and were companions of the sun.[15] They were famous in the three worlds because of truthfulness and rigidity of their vows.

'O protector of the earth! The revered rishi Daksha, great son and great father, was born from Brahma's right toe. From the left toe was born the great-soul's[16] wife. Through her, the sage had fifty daughters. These daughters were lotus-eyed and were all unblemished in features. Since Prajapati[17] had no sons, he made these daughters his *putrikas*.[18] O king! In accordance with the divine rites, he gave ten to Dharma, twenty-seven to Indu[19] and thirteen to Kashyapa. Listen to me as I recite the names of Dharma's wives—Kirti, Lakshmi, Dhriti, Medha, Pushti, Shraddha, Kriya, Buddhi, Lajja and Mati. As decreed by the one who created himself,[20] these ten wives of Dharma are the doors to Dharma. The twenty-seven wives of Soma[21] are known throughout the worlds. These wives of Soma are pure in their vows and have been appointed to measure the progression of time. They are the magical nakshatras,[22] used to regulate the movement of the worlds.

'The grandfather[23] had another son named Manu. He was a prajapati[24] and his sons were the eight vasus. I shall name them in detail—Dhara, Dhruva, Soma, Aha, Anila, Anala, Pratyusha and Prabhasa. These are known as the eight vasus. Dhara was the son[25] of Dhumra, and so was Dhruva, who had knowledge of the brahman. Chandra was the son of Manasvini and Shvasa's son was Shvasana.[26] Aha was Rata's son and the fire[27] was Shandilya's son. It is known that Pratyusha and Prabhasa were the sons of Prabhata. Dhara again had two sons, named Dravina and Hutahavyavaha. Dhruva's son was the illustrious Kala, the regulator of the worlds. Soma's son was the lustrous Varcha and the beautiful Varcha had sons named Shishira, Prana and Ramana. The sons of Aha were Jyoti, Shama, Shanta and Muni. Agni's son[28] was the illustrious Kumara, born in a bed of reeds. Since he was reared by the krittikas,[29] he is also known as Kartikeya. Other sons[30] were Shakha, Vishakha and Naigamesha, as the youngest. Anila's wife was Shiva and her sons were Purojava and Avijnatagati. These were the two sons of Anila. It is known that Pratyusha's son was the rishi Devala. Devala himself had two sons who were learned and forgiving. Brihaspati's[31] sister was celibate and the first among women. Unattached to the world and attached to yoga, she roamed the world and became the wife of the eighth vasu, Prabhasa. Thus was born the illustrious Vishvakarma, founder of all crafts, creator of a thousand arts, artisan to the thirty gods,

maker of all ornaments, best of craftsmen and maker of celestial chariots for the gods. Men thrive on the arts created by this great soul and it is for this reason that the everlasting Vishvakarma is eternally worshipped.

'The illustrious Dharma emerged by cleaving Brahma's right breast, assuming human form and bringing happiness to all the worlds. Dharma had three supreme sons, beautiful to all beings—Shama, Kama and Harsha. They support the worlds through their energy. Kama's wife was Rati, Shama's was Prapti and Harsha's was Nanda. The worlds depend on them for sustenance. Kashyapa was Marichi's son and Kashyapa's sons were the gods and the demons. O tiger among kings! He is therefore the origin of the worlds. Tvashtri,[32] in the form of a mare, became the wife of Savita[33] and this fortunate one gave birth to the two Ashvins in the sky. O ruler of men! Aditi had twelve sons, headed by Shakra.[34] The youngest of them was Vishnu, on whom the worlds depend. These are the thirty-three gods. I shall now recount to you their progeny, according to their groups,[35] families[36] and classes.[37] One must know that the rudras, saddhyas, maruts, vasus, bhargavas and vishvadevas are each a group. Vinata's son Garuda, the powerful Aruna and the illustrious Brihaspati are counted among the adityas. The two Ashvins and all herbs and animals are counted among the *guhyakas*.[38] O king! These are the classes of the gods, recited in sequence. When a man recites this narration, he is cleansed from all sins.

'The illustrious Bhrigu emerged by cleaving open Brahma's heart. Bhrigu's son was the learned Shukra, wise and the son of one who was wise, and a planet. On being appointed by the one who created himself,[39] he travels the sky to sustain life in the three worlds, presiding over rain and drought, fear and freedom from fear. He is celibate, faithful in his vows, wise, learned in yoga and has great intelligence. He is the preceptor of the gods and the demons. Bhrigu's son was thus appointed by the mighty one[40] to look after that which should be obtained and preserve that which has been obtained. Bhrigu had another son named Chyavana, learned, righteous and radiant in his austerities. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! In his anger, he emerged from his mother's womb and set her free.[41] Manu's daughter Arushi became that wise one's[42] wife and Ourva,[43] of great fame, was born from her, ripping open her thighs. Even when young, he had great energy and all the qualities and practised great austerities. His son was Richika and Richika's son was Jamadagni. Jamadagni had four great-souled sons—the youngest of them was Rama,[44] superior to the others in all qualities, skilled in the use of all weapons and the destroyer of Kshatriyas. Ourva had one hundred sons, Jamadagni[45] being the foremost. He[46] had thousands of sons and thus Bhrigu's offspring proliferated.

'Brahma had two other sons, whose signs can be seen in the worlds. They are Dhata

and Vidhata and they lived with Manu. Their sister is the beautiful goddess Lakshmi, whose abode is the lotus and her sons, born of the mind, are the horses that travel in the sky. The goddess Jyeshtha was born from Shukra and became Varuna's wife. She gave birth to a son known as Bala and a daughter named Shura,[47] who brings joy to the gods.

'When hungry creatures began to devour each other for food, Adharma, the destroyer of all beings, was born. His wife was Nirriti and so rakshasas[48] are known as nairritas. She also had three other terrible sons, always engaged in evil deeds—Bhaya,[49] Mahabhaya[50] and Mrityu,[51] the destroyers of beings. The divine Tamra gave birth to five daughters known in the worlds as Kaki, Shyeni, Bhasi, Dhritarashtri and Shuki. O, ruler of men! Kaki gave birth to the owls, Shyeni gave birth to the hawks, Bhasi gave birth to the cocks and vultures, Dhritarashtri gave birth to all the ducks, swans and geese and the learned and righteous Shuki, blessed with the best qualities and adorned with the best marks, gave birth to the parrots.

'Krodha gave birth to nine daughters who were prone to anger—Mrigi, Mrigamanda, Hari, Bhadramana, Matangi, Sharduli, Shveta, Surabhi and the famous Surasa, blessed with every fortunate mark. O best of men! Mrigi's offspring are all the deer. O scorcher of enemies! Mrigamanda's offspring are bears, other forms of deer and yaks. Bhadramana had the elephant Airavata as her son. Her son Airavata is a great elephant and the divine elephant. Hari's progeny were tawny monkeys and nimble monkeys. It is said that the *golangula*[52] monkeys are also Hari's sons. O fortunate one! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Sharduli gave birth to lions and tigers and certainly also to big panthers and leopards. O ruler of men! The offspring of Matangi are the elephants. Shveta gave birth to a swift cardinal[53] elephant named Shveta. O king! Surabhi gave birth to two daughters, the beautiful Rohini and the famous Gandharvi. In addition, cattle were born from Rohini and horses from Gandharvi. Surasa gave birth to the nagas and Kadru to the pannagas.[54] Anala gave birth to the seven kinds of trees that produce round fruit.

'Anala had another daughter named Shuki. Surasa[55] was Kadru's daughter. Shyeni was Aruna[56]'s wife. She gave birth to two mighty and powerful sons, named Sampati and the valorous Jatayu. Vinata had two famous sons, Garuda and Aruna. O lord over men and chief among those who are wise! Thus have I completely described to you the origins of all principal creatures. The man who hears this is cleansed from all his sins, gets to know everything and finally attains the highest state after death.'

## 61

Janamejaya said, 'O great-souled and revered one! I wish to hear in detail accounts of

the origins and deeds among men of all creatures who assumed human form—gods, demons, yakshas, rakshasas and other beings.'

Vaishampayana said, 'O Indra among men! I shall tell you everything about those gods who took birth among men, and about the demons. The bull among the danavas was known as Viprachitti, and as a bull among men, he was known as Jarasandha. O king! The son of Diti, known as Hiranyakashipu, was known in the world of men as the mighty Shishupala. Prahlada's younger brother, known as Samhrada, became known as Shalya, chief among the Bahlikas. O lord over men! Known as Anuhrada, the mighty youngest brother became famous in this world as Dhrishtaketu. O king! The son of Diti, known as Shibi, became the famous king Druma on earth. O ruler of men! The best of the asuras, known as Bashkala, was born as the famous Bhagadatta. O king! The five valorous and swift asuras—Ayahshira, Asvhashira, Ayahshanku, Gaganamurdha and Vegavan—were born on earth in the illustrious lineage of Kekaya and became great kings. The mighty asura who was known as Ketumana, was born on earth as King Amitouja. The great, fortunate and famous asura, Svarbhanu, became King Ugrasena of terrible deeds. The great and fortunate asura, known as Ashva, became the valorous and invincible King Ashoka. O king! O bull among men! His younger brother Ashvapati, son of Diti, was born as King Hardikya. The great and fortunate asura, famous as Vrishaparva, became King Dirghaprajna on earth. Vrishaparva's younger brother, known as Ajaka, became King Malla on earth. The strong and great asura known as Ashvagriva became King Rochamana on earth. The wise and illustrious asura known as Sukshma became the famous King Brihanta on earth. Tuhunda, supreme among asuras, became King Senabindu on earth. The extremely strong asura, known as Isripa, became King Papajit on earth, and his valour was well known. The great asura known as Ekachakra became known on earth as Prativindhya. The great asura known as Virupaksha, capable of displaying different modes of fighting, was known on earth as King Chitravarmana. The supreme danava Hara, the abductor of his enemies, was born as Suvastu, a bull among men. The mightily powerful asura, destroyer of enemy armies and known as Ahara, became famous on earth as King Bahlika. The supreme among asuras, Nichandra, whose face was like the moon, became famous on earth as the fortunate King Munjakesha. The wise and invincible asura known as Nikumbha became Devadhipa on earth, the best of kings. Sharabha, the great asura who was a son of Diti, became rajarshi Pourava among men. The asura who was known as the second Shalabha, became King Prahrada in the land of the Bahlikas on earth. Chandra, the best of Diti's sons and as handsome as the lord of the stars[57] in the world, became rajarshi Rishika on earth, supreme among kings. O best of kings! The best of asuras, known as Mritapa, became King Paschimanupaka on earth. The great and powerful asura known as Gavishtha became King Drumasena on earth. The fortunate and great asura, famous as Mayura, became Vishva, ruler of the earth. The asura who was his[58] younger brother

and was known as Suparna, became King Kalakriti on earth. The supremely powerful among asuras, known as Chandrahanta, became rajarashi Shunaka on earth, supreme among kings. The great asura known as Chandravinashana became rajarashi Janaki on earth, supreme among kings. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! The supreme danava known as Dirghajihva became famous on earth as the ruler of the kingdom of Kashi. The planet who was born from Simhi and who oppressed the sun and the moon,[59] became famous as Kratha, ruler of men. It is said that the eldest of the four sons of Anayu, the asura Vikshara, became the powerful King Vasumitra. The great asura who was Vikshara's second brother, became king of the land of Pamsu. The best of the asuras known as Balavira became Poundramatsyaka, ruler of men. O king! The great asura known as Vritra became rajarshi Manimana on earth, ruler of men. The asura who was his[60] younger brother and was known as Krodhahanta, became the famous King Danda on earth. The asura known as Krodhavardhana became Dandadhara on earth, ruler of men.

'O ruler of men! The eight sons of the asura Kalaka were all born on earth and became kings who were as powerful as tigers. Out of the eight great kaleya asuras, the eldest became the illustrious King Jayatsena of Magadha. The illustrious second, equal to Harihaya,[61] became King Aparajita on earth. O great king! The third great asura, immensely powerful and with immense valour, became the king of the nishadas on earth. The fourth is known on earth as Shrenimana, supreme among rajarshis. The fifth great asura, greatest among them, became King Mahouja on earth, the tormentor of his foes. The great and wise asura who was the sixth, became Abhiru on earth, best of rajarshis. From that group[62] came Samundrasena, renowned all over the earth, right up to the shores of the ocean, for his learning in dharma and artha. O ruler of men! The eighth of the kaleyas and a tormentor of enemies, known as Brihata, became a righteous king, devoted to the welfare of all beings.

'O ruler of men! From the race of asuras known as *krodhavasha*,[63] many famous kings were born on earth. I have mentioned them to you—Nandika, Karnaveshta, Siddhartha, Kitaka, Suvira, Subahu, Mahavira, Bahlika, Krodha, Vichitya, Surasa, the handsome king Nila, Viradhama, Dantavakra, Durjaya, Rukmi, King Janamejaya, a tiger among kings, Ashada, Vayuvega, Bhuriteja, Ekalavya, Sumitra, Vatadhana, Gomukha, the kings known as Karushaka, Kshemadhurti, Shrutayu, Uddhava, Brihatsena, Kshema, Ugratirtha, Kuhara, the king of Kalinga and Matimana, an Indra among men and known as Ishvara. O descendant of the Kuru lineage and O ruler of the earth! O great king! In ancient times, these kings were born on earth from the race known as krodhavasha and they had great strength and performed great deeds. O ruler of men! Devaka, who was as resplendent as the king of the gods, was born on earth as the chief of the gandharvas.

‘O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Drona, the son of Bharadvaja, was not born from a womb. He was a part of the illustrious *devarshi* Brihaspati. O tiger among kings! He had great energy and great fame and performed great deeds. He was the best among those who were skilled in the knowledge of all weapons. Those who had knowledge of the Vedas knew him to be learned in the Vedas, as well as in knowledge of weapons.[64] Drona brought fame to his lineage and was like Indra in his deeds. O descendant of the Bharata lineage and O ruler of men! The brave and lotus-eyed Ashvatthama, of great valour, tormentor of enemies and fearful to enemy armies, was born from three parts of Mahadeva that merged into one—*yama*,[65] kama[66] and krodha.[67] Through the curse of Vashishtha and the design of Vasava,[68] the eight vasus were born as the sons of Shantanu,[69] through Ganga. The youngest was Bhishma, intelligent, learned in the Vedas, the best of speakers, fearful to enemy armies and the dispeller of fear among the Kurus. He was supreme among those who had all knowledge, had great energy and fought with the great-souled Bhargava Rama, son of Jamadagni. O king! The brahmarshi who was known on earth as Kripa and who was the embodiment of virility, was born from the group of rudras. O king! Know the king and great warrior,[70] known in the world as Shakuni, the tormentor of foes, to be Dvapara himself. He, who was known as Satyaki, truthful to his promises, upholder of the pride of the Vrishni lineage and the tormentor of enemies, was born from parts of the divine maruts. Rajarshi Drupada, best among those skilled in the usage of all weapons, was also born in the world of men from the same gods.[71] O king! Know that Kritavarma, the best of bulls among Kshatriyas, performer of unparalleled deeds and chief among lords of men and rajarshi Virata, the conqueror of other kingdoms and scorcher of foes, were also born from the class of maruts.

‘Arishta’s son, renowned as Hamsa and king of the gandharvas, was born to propagate the Kuru lineage. He was known as Dhritarashtra, Krishna Dvaipayana’s son. He had great energy, long arms and he was a ruler of men with wisdom in his eyes. Through his mother’s fault and the anger of a rishi, he was born blind. Know that he who was known in the world as Vidura, best among all wise men, was the greatly fortunate son of Atri himself and the best among all sons. The evil-minded and evil-spirited King Duryodhana, who brought disgrace to the lineage of the Kurus, was born on earth from Kali’s part. O ruler of the earth! He was responsible for destroying everything on earth, he created discord and was hated by everyone in the world. He fanned enmity and the great fire of destruction that ended all beings. Among men, Pulastya’s sons[72] were born as his brothers. Duhshasana onwards, there were 100 in number, all performer of cruel deeds. Durmukha, Duhsaha and the others, whose names will not be mentioned. All of them assisted Duryodhana. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! They were all sons of Pulastya.

‘O king! Know that King Yudhishthira was a part of Dharma, Bhimasena of the god of wind and Arjuna of the king of the gods. Nakula and Sahadeva, most handsome and enchanting to all beings, were parts of the Ashvins. He who was known as Suvarcha, the mighty son of Soma, became Arjuna’s son Abhimanyu, the performer of great deeds. Know that maharatha Dhrishtadyumna was born from Agni’s part. O king! Know that the male-female Shikhandi was born from a rakshasa. O bull of the Bharata lineage! Know that Droupadi’s five sons were born from the class of the vishvadevas.[73] Know that the greatly famous maharatha Karna, who parted with his natural armour, was born from the celestial sun. From the eternal god of the gods, whose name is Narayana, was born, in the world of men, the mighty Vasudeva. The immensely powerful Baladeva was a part of the naga Shesha. O king! Know that Pradyumna, of great energy, was a part of Sanatkumara. O Indra among men! In this way, the parts of many of other gods were born in Vasudeva’s lineage and increased its glory.

‘O king! I have already told you about the class of apsaras. As instructed by Vasava, their parts were also born on earth. O lord of men! Sixteen thousand parts of these goddesses were born in this world as the wives of Narayana. A part of Shri[74] herself was born on earth out of love. She was born as a faultless daughter in the house of Drupada, from the middle of a sacrificial altar. She was neither tall nor short, and had the fragrance of a blue lotus. Her eyes were long, like lotus leaves. Her hips were well formed. Her hair was long and black. She had all the auspicious marks on her body and she had the shine of lapis lazuli.[75] She charmed the minds of five men who were like Indras. The goddesses Siddhi and Dhriti became the mothers of the five and were known as Kunti and Madri. Mati[76] became the daughter of Subala.

‘O king! Thus have I described to you the birth and incarnations of the parts of the gods, asuras, gandharvas and also rakshasas, those who were born as kings on earth, drunk with the desire to fight and the great souls who were born in the extensive lineage of the Yadus. Hearing this account of *anshavatarana* brings wealth, fame, progeny, long life and victory and should be heard without questioning. On hearing the anshavatarana of devas, gandharvas and rakshasas, learned men know of creation, preservation and destruction and are unmoved in adversities.’

62

Janamejaya said, ‘O Brahmana! I have heard completely from you the account of the incarnations of devas, danavas, rakshasas, gandharvas and apsaras. O Brahmana! I now wish to hear from the beginning the account of the origin of the Kuru lineage. Please narrate it in front of these Brahmana sages.’

Vaishampayana said, ‘O best of the Bharata lineage! The founder of the Pourava dynasty was the valorous Duhshanta.[77] The victorious one protected the entire earth up

to its four limits and was the lord of the four quarters of the earth and also regions that are in the middle of the ocean. That chastiser of enemies was also lord of the entire country of the *mlecchas*,[78] which was populated by the four varnas and beyond the ocean full of gems. During this king's rule, there was no mixture of castes and no performer of evil deeds. No one needed to plough the land. No one needed to mine the earth. O tiger among men! Everyone was devoted to dharma and everyone acted in accordance with the norms of righteous conduct. O son! While he was the ruler of the land, there was no fear from thieves and no fear from famines. While he was the ruler of the land, there was no fear from disease. All the four varnas took pleasure in undertaking their own duties, without an eye to the fruits of the action. Depending upon him as a protector of the earth, they confronted no fear from anywhere. Parjanya[79] showered down rain at the appropriate time and the crops were succulent. The earth abounded with great stores of riches then.

'He was young and his great prowess was extraordinary. His body was capable of withstanding the vajra. He could have raised up and carried in his arms Mandara,[80] with all its woods and forests. He was skilled in fighting with the bow and arrow, the club and all weapons, on the back of an elephant and on the back of a horse. He was like Vishnu in his strength and like the sun in his radiance. He was like the ocean in his equanimity and like the earth in his tolerance. The great king was loved by all his subjects, in cities and in the country. Everyone abided by dharma.'

63

Vaishampayana said, 'Once upon a time, the mighty-armed king went to the dense forest, with hundreds of horses and elephants and accompanied by many men and mounts. As he progressed, he was surrounded by hundreds of warriors armed with swords, spears, clubs, maces, javelins and lances in their hands. As the king marched on, the warriors roared like lions. Conches and drums sounded. The wheels of the chariots thundered. The huge elephants trumpeted. The horses neighed. And there was the sound of arms, all resulting in a deafening roar. Beautiful women came out on the balconies of terraced palaces to gaze upon the royal and famous warrior. The women knew their king to be the equal of Shakra[81] in destroying his enemies. In fending off enemy elephants, it was as if the women gazed upon the wielder of the vajra himself. They saw a tiger among men, extremely powerful in battle. The strength of his arms allowed no enemy to be alive. Having uttered these words of praise, the women, out of love for the king, showered down flowers on his head. Wherever he went, the best of Brahmanas paid homage to him along the way.

'Extremely pleased, he went to the forest for a hunt. For a long distance, the citizens and residents of the country followed the king. They were restrained from going further

only on the king's instructions. The lord of the earth's chariot filled the earth, even heaven, with its roar. It was like Suparna.[82] After progressing, the wise one saw a beautiful forest like Nandana.[83] It was full of *bilva*, *arka*, *khadira*, *kapittha* and *dhava* trees. It was uneven and full of mountains and valleys and was strewn with boulders. There was no water and no human habitations. It stretched on for many yojanas. This terrible forest abounded with herds of deer and other forest animals. With the help of his servants, force and mounts, Duhshanta, tiger among men, killed deer of many kinds. Many families of tigers were killed as they came within the reach of his arrows. Many were pierced with Duhshanta's arrows. That bull among men killed those that were near with his sword. Supreme among those who wield spears, he killed many in that way. His valour was boundless and he was skilled in the circular motions of the club. He roamed around the forest, killing wild animals with his spear, sword, mace, club and javelin. The great forest was perturbed by the extraordinarily powerful king and his soldiers, who loved the fight, and the larger animals fled. Having lost their leaders, their herds dispersed, the deer screamed out in fright and fled in all directions. The river beds were dry. Emaciated in their thirst for water and their hearts tired with exhaustion, they dropped down unconscious, hungry, thirsty and tired.

'Some of them were eaten raw by those hungry tigers among men. Others built a fire and, having ignited it, cut up the pieces of meat and ate them in the proper way. Many mighty elephants were wounded by weapons and went mad. Raising their trunks, they stamped violently, flowing blood and emitting urine and dung in fear. These wild elephants trampled to death many men. With the cloud of strength and the rain of arrows, the king eliminated the once teeming forest of its large animals, as if a buffalo had run amuck.'

## 64

Vaishampayana said, 'Having killed thousands of animals, the king and his many mounts entered another forest to hunt deer. Though supremely strong, he was hungry and thirsty. Travelling alone, he penetrated the deep forest until he came to a vast wilderness. Passing beyond this, he came to a wood that was full of holy pilgrimages, beautiful to the eyes and a joy to the heart. Beyond this, he came to another great wood where a cool breeze blew. The trees were full of flowers and soft grass extended on all sides. The great wood echoed with the sweet songs of birds. There were trees all around, with branches that offered pleasant shade. Bees[84] swarmed over the creepers and there was a supreme beauty there. There was no tree without flowers and fruit and none with thorns. Nor did that wood have one[85] not made dark with swarming bees. Resounding with the sweet songs of birds, adorned with beautiful flowers that blossomed in all seasons, with the pleasant shade of blossoming trees everywhere, and with pleasant

expanses of grass, that supreme wood was beautiful. And the great archer[86] entered it. Bedecked with flowers, the trees were shaken by the breeze and repeatedly showered wonderful flowers. They rose up into the sky, full of the sweet songs of birds. The trees there were attired in many-coloured garments of wonderful flowers. They were heavy with the weight of new shoots and flowers and full of the sweet songs of birds and bees.

'On seeing that expanse, adorned with many flowers and surrounded by pleasant creepers that seemed to form canopies, the greatly energetic one was delighted. With branches laden with flowers intertwined with one another, the wood then seemed to shine like Indra's pennant. A pleasant, cool and fragrant breeze, carrying the pollen of flowers, wafted around the wood and sported with the trees. Such were the qualities of the wood the king gazed upon. It was located in the delta of a river and had the beauty of flagpoles. In that forest, the abode of extremely happy birds, the king saw a charming hermitage. It was full of many trees and blazing fires.[87] Many *yatis*,[88] valakhilyas and other groups of sages were there. Many places for sacrificial fires were around and the flowers formed carpets on the ground. O king! The sacred river Malini, which gladdens the heart, flowed by and created beautiful and large pools[89] of water. It was full of many waterfowl and made the hermitage even more beautiful. The king was delighted to see predatory beasts and deer peacefully together.

'The king, whose chariot no one could obstruct, entered that enchanting hermitage, which was like the world of the gods and beautiful everywhere. He saw the river with sacred waters embracing the hermitage, as if the mother of all beings was established there. *Chakravaka*[90] birds swarmed along its banks. The water carried flowers and foam. Groups of kinnaras and monkeys and bears lived there. The sound of holy chants and studying resounded along the sand banks. Rutting elephants, tigers and gigantic snakes frequented the place. Having seen the sacred hermitage ornamented by the river Malini with beautiful banks and islands, the king then desired to enter it. It was like the abode of Nara and Narayana, beloved by the waters of the Ganga and echoing with the sound of madly dancing peacocks.

'The bull among men entered the great wood, which resembled Chitraratha's[91] garden. He wished to see the radiant maharshi Kanva, descendant of Kashyapa, blessed with all the qualities and the power of austerities. He stopped his retinue of chariots, cavalry and infantry at the entry to the wood and told his soldiers, "I will go to see the descendant of Kashyapa, blessed with the power of austerities and free of passion. Remain here until I return." As soon as he entered the wood, which was like Nandana, the lord of men derived great pleasure and forgot his hunger and thirst. The ruler of men put aside his signs of kingship. He entered the supreme hermitage with only his priest and his adviser. He wished to see the sage whose store of ascetic powers was everlasting. He saw that the hermitage was like Brahma's world, with buzzing bees and

singing birds.

‘In one place, that tiger among men heard chanting of the Rig Veda, recited in proper word and metre by the best of Brahmanas, as they went about their work. Another place was adorned by those who were learned in various branches of sacrificial rituals.[92] That hermitage was adorned by ascetics who were controlled and rigid in their vows. In another place, those who were learned in the Atharva Veda, respected by the assembled, recited the samhitas in the proper tone and metre. In other places, Brahmanas learned in the science of tones recited other mantras, so that all these holy sounds made the hermitage seem like the illustrious world of Brahma. There were those who were skilled in the art of sacrifices and rules of recital. Others were learned in the Vedas and knew the principles of logic, self-realization and salvation. There were those who knew the meaning of words and were accomplished in combining them. Others were skilled in special rituals and the rites for salvation. Some were skilled in arguments, refuting redundant arguments and knew the secrets of words, philosophy and time. The sound of chanting and hymns was everywhere. The destroyer of enemy armies saw around him many learned Brahmanas of rigid vows, all engaged in meditation and offerings.

‘The lord of the earth was astonished to see the beautiful and coloured seats that had been carefully laid out. On observing the rituals with which the Brahmanas worshipped the gods, that supreme among kings thought that he was in the world of Brahma. The more the king saw of the beautiful, holy and solitary hermitage of Kashyapa’s descendant,[93] protected by his austerities and qualities, the more he wished to see. Kashyapa’s descendant’s hermitage was full of great rishis, powerful in their austerities and rigid in their vows. Thus, the slayer of enemies entered there, with his adviser and his priest.’

## 65

Vaishampayana said, ‘Thereupon, the mighty-armed one left his advisers behind and went on inside the hermitage alone. But he did not find the rishi of rigid vows.[94] On seeing that the rishi was not there and the hermitage was deserted, he called out in a loud voice that echoed in the wood, “Who is here?” On hearing his words, a maiden emerged from the hermitage. She was dressed in the attire of an ascetic and was as beautiful as Shri.[95] As soon as the black-eyed maiden saw King Duhshanta, she welcomed him and paid him homage. She offered him a seat, gave him water to wash his feet and the gift due to a guest. O king! She then asked that lord of men about his welfare. Having honoured him in the appropriate way and asked about his welfare, the maiden then smilingly asked the king what she could do. Having been thus honoured in the appropriate way, the king spoke to the maiden who was unblemished in form and sweet in speech. “I have come to pay my respects to the illustrious rishi Kanva. O

beautiful and fortunate one! Where has the revered one gone?" Shakuntala replied, "My revered father has gone out of the hermitage to collect fruit. Please wait for a while. You will see him when he returns."'

Vaishampayana said, 'The king did not see the rishi there. But having been thus addressed by the maiden, he saw that she was dazzling, with a charming smile and beautiful hips. She was dazzling in her beauty, austerities and humility and endowed with beauty and youth. The ruler of the earth told her, "O one with the beautiful hips! Who are you? Who do you belong to? Why have you come to this forest? O beautiful one! You are blessed with beauty and qualities. From where have you come? O beautiful one! You have robbed me of my heart from the first glance. O beautiful one! I wish to learn all about you. Please tell me." Having been thus addressed by the king in the hermitage, the maiden smiled and told him in sweet words, "O Duhshanta! I am regarded as the daughter of the illustrious, righteous, great-souled ascetic Kanva, wise in the path of dharma." Duhshanta said, "That illustrious and extremely fortunate one is worshipped by all the worlds and is known to have never spilled his seed. The god of dharma may stray from the right path, but not this ascetic of rigid vows. O beautiful and charming one! How can you be his daughter? Dispel this great doubt from my mind."

'Shakuntala said, "O king! Then listen to how I have learnt what occurred in earlier times and how I came to be the sage's daughter. Once upon a time, a rishi came here and asked questions about my birth. O king! Hear what the illustrious one[96] told him about me. Kanva said, 'In ancient times, Vishvamitra alarmed and oppressed Shakra,[97] the king of the gods, with his great austerities. He feared that with the blazing energy of his austerities, he would dislodge him from his seat. Purandara[98] therefore told Menaka, "O, Menaka!

You are the best of the celestial apsaras in your qualities. O amiable one! Please listen to what I have to say and do that which will bring about my welfare. The great ascetic Vishvamitra possesses the sun's radiance. He has been engaged in such austerities that my mind is trembling. O Menaka! O you with the slender waist! Vishamitra is your burden now. His soul is fixed on meditation and he is engaged in the performance of awesome austerities. He is unassailable and may dislodge me from my seat. Go to him and seduce him. Bring obstructions to his austerities. Do that which is good for me. O one with the beautiful hips! Turn him away from his austerities with your beauty, youth, sweetness, efforts, smiles and words."

'"Menaka said, "O, illustrious one! That illustrious one has great energy and the power of great austerities. You yourself know that he is prone to anger. The energy, asceticism and wrath of that great-souled one have made even you afraid of him. Why should I not be scared? He made even the illustrious Vashishtha suffer grief through the premature death of his sons. He was born a Kshatriya, but became a Brahmana through his powers. For the sake of performing ablutions, he created a river with such a lot of

water that it is difficult to cross. That sacred river is still known in the worlds by the name of Koushiki.[99] In ancient times, the great-souled one's wife was maintained there by the righteous rajarshi Matanga, who had become a hunter. O lord! After the famine was over, the powerful sage returned to his hermitage and gave the river the name of Para. O king of the gods! Extremely pleased with Matanga, he himself was the officiating priest at his sacrifice and out of fear, you yourself went there to drink the soma. In his anger, he who was descended from the stars[100] created a wealth of other stars, beginning with Shravana[101] and beyond the existing stars. I am afraid to go to a person whose deeds are like this. O lord! Tell me how I can escape being burnt from his anger. He can burn down the worlds with his energy. He can make the earth quake with a kick. He can uproot the great Meru and whirl it around. How can a woman like me touch someone with such austerities, such energy that is like a blazing fire and who is in complete control of his senses? His mouth is radiant as the blazing fire. The pupils of his eyes are like the sun and the moon. His tongue is like Yama. O best of the gods! How can someone like me touch him? Yama, Soma, the maharshis, the saddhyas, the vishvadevas and the valakhilyas are all alarmed of him. Why should someone like me not be afraid? O lord of the gods! Nevertheless, commanded by you, I must go to that sage. O king of the gods! Find a means so that I can accomplish your wishes under your protection. O god! When I sport before him, let Marut[102] strip me of my garments. On your instructions, let Manmatha[103] be there to help me in my work. Let the breeze carry soft fragrances from the wood when I tempt the rishi."' Having said this and once her wishes had been catered to, she went to Koushika's hermitage."'

66

'Shakuntala said,[104] "Having been thus addressed, Shakra[105] commanded the wind, who was always mobile, to be present with Menaka. The beautiful-hipped Menaka then timidly entered the hermitage and saw Vishvamitra, who had burnt all his sins through austerities, but was still engaged in austerities. Having paid her homage to the rishi, she began to play around before him. At that instant, the wind robbed her of her garments, which were as white as the moon. Bashful at Marut's conduct, the beautiful one dropped to the ground, in an attempt to catch the garment. The supreme among sages saw Menaka grasp at her garment. He saw her nude and that she was beautiful, with no marks of age on her body. On seeing her beauty and qualities, the bull among Brahmanas was struck with desire and wished to unite with her. He invited her and the unblemished one accepted his invitation.

'"The two of them then passed a long time in the wood, making love as they wished. It seemed to be but a single day. Through the sage, Shakuntala was born to Menaka. Menaka went to the banks of the Malini, which passed through a lovely plain in the

Himalayas. Having given birth, Menaka left the child on the banks of the Malini and left. Her objective accomplished, she quickly returned to Shakra's assembly.

'"The daughter lay in a deserted forest frequented by carnivorous lions and tigers. On seeing this, vultures[106] surrounded her from all sides, so as to protect her. The birds protected Menaka's child. Having gone there to perform ablutions, I[107] saw her in the deep and lonely wood, surrounded by birds. I took her home and brought her up as my own daughter. According to the sacred texts, there are three kinds of fathers. In proper order, they are the one who gives a body, the one who protects and the one who provides food. Because she was found in the solitude of the forest, surrounded by birds, I have given her the name of Shakuntala. O amiable one! Know that it is thus that Shakuntala became my daughter. The unblemished Shakuntala also thinks of me as her father."'

'"When asked, this is how the maharshi described the account of my birth. O ruler of men! I do not know my own. But this is how I think of Kanva as my father. O king! I have told you exactly as I heard it."'

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'Duhshanta said, "O princess! O fortunate one! You have spoken well. O one with the beautiful hips! Be my wife. Tell me what I can do for you. O beautiful one! Today, I will present you with golden necklaces, garments, golden earrings, sparkling gems and jewels from many countries, golden coins and skins. Let my entire kingdom be yours today. O beautiful one! Be my wife. O lovely one! O timid one! O one with the beautiful thighs! Marry me according to *gandharva*[108] rites, because it is said that a gandharva marriage is the best."

'Shakuntala replied, "O king! My father has left the hermitage to collect fruits for food. Please wait for a while. He will return and give me to you."

'Duhshanta said, "O unblemished one! O one with the beautiful hips! I wish that you accept me yourself. Know that I am standing here because of you. Know that my heart is completely in you. One is one's own best friend. One can certainly resort to one's own self. Therefore, in accordance with what is dharma, you can give your own self to others. Eight kinds of marriage are known to have the sanction of dharma—*brahma, daiva, arsha, prajapatya, asura, gandharva, rakshasa* and *paishacha*. Manu, descended from the one who is self-created,[109] has respectively described which of these is in accordance with dharma. O unblemished one! Know that according to dharma, the first four are sanctioned for Brahmanas and the first six for Kshatriyas. For kings, even the rakshasa form is permissible. The asura form is sanctioned for Vaishyas and Shudras. Of the five,[110] three are in accordance with dharma and two are not sanctioned. The paishacha and asura forms should never be used. These are the principles laid down by

dharma and one should follow them. The gandharva and rakshasa forms are sanctioned for Kshatriyas. Therefore, you need not be scared. There is no doubt that either one, or a mix of the two, is appropriate for us. O beautiful one! I am full of desire for you and so are you. You should become my wife according to the gandharva form of marriage."

'Shakuntala said, "O best of the Puru race! O lord! If this is the path indicated by dharma and I am really my own mistress, know my terms before I give myself. Give me your word to this secret agreement between us. O king! O Duhshanta! Give me your truthful promise that the son who is born to me will succeed you. If that is accepted, you may unite with me."'

Vaishampayana said, 'Without any hesitation, the king said, "O one with a sweet smile! It shall be that way. I will even take you to my capital. O one with the beautiful hips! It is what you deserve and I promise you truthfully." Saying this, the rajarshi accepted the hand of she whose gait was without blemish according to the proper rites and she accepted him. He returned to his capital after reiterating his promise and repeatedly assuring her, "I will send a fourfold army[111] to escort you. O one with a sweet smile! I will take you to my palace with that." O Janamejaya! Having thus promised her, the king went away. As he went away, the king began to worry about Kashyapa's son.[112] "What will the illustrious one, with all his ascetic powers, do when he hears?" Thinking in this way, he entered his capital.

'A little after the king had left, Kanva returned to his hermitage. But Shakuntala was too ashamed to go and meet her father. However, the great ascetic Kanva had divine sight and knew everything. Having seen everything with his divine sight, the illustrious one was pleased and said, "O fortunate one! What you have done secretly today, this act of union with a man without my sanction, is not against dharma. A secret gandharva marriage between a desiring man and a desiring woman, without mantras, is said to be the best for Kshatriyas. O Shakuntala! Duhshanta, the one you have accepted as a husband, is the best among men, great-souled and devoted to dharma. You will give birth to a son who will be known in this world as great-souled and immensely mighty. He will extend his sway over this entire earth that is bounded by the oceans. When that great-souled king of kings marches out against his enemies, he will always be irresistible."

'Shakuntala then came to the tired sage and washed his feet. She took down his heavy load and properly laid out the fruits. She said, "I have chosen King Duhshanta, best among men, as my husband. Please give me and his advisers your blessings." Kanva replied, "O beautiful one! I am prepared to bless him for your sake. O fortunate one! Ask for a boon that you wish." Wishing to bring welfare to Duhshanta, Shakuntala then asked for the boon that kings of the Puru lineage should always be virtuous and would never be dislodged from their kingdoms.'

Vaishampayana said, 'When Duhshanta left, after making his promise to Shakuntala, the one with the beautiful thighs gave birth to a son who had immense energy. She bore him for three years. He had the splendour of a blazing fire. O Janamejaya! Duhshanta's son had great beauty, generosity and all the qualities. Kanva, supreme among holy ones, performed all the stipulated rites, including those of birth, and the wise one began to grow. The boy had sharp and white teeth and the young one was strong enough to kill lions. He was handsome and immensely strong, with a broad head. On his palm, he had the sign of a chakra.[113] He quickly grew up, like a son of the gods. When he was only six years old, he was so strong that he tied up lions, tigers, boars, buffaloes and elephants to trees near Kanva's hermitage. He rode them, tamed them, played with them and chased them. The inhabitants of Kanva's hermitage gave him a name. "Since he has subjugated everything, let him be called Sarvadamana".[114] Thus the boy came to be known as Sarvadamana. He had great strength, valour and energy.

'On seeing the boy's superhuman exploits, the sage told Shakuntala that the time had come for him to be instated as the heir apparent.[115] On seeing his great strength, Kanva told his disciples, "Quickly take Shakuntala and her son away from this hermitage and to her husband. She is blessed with all the auspicious marks. It is not fit that women should live forever with their relatives.[116] Such acts destroy fame, character and virtue. Take her away without delay." The greatly energetic disciples all agreed and left for Gajasahrya[117] with Shakuntala and her son. Taking her lotus-eyed son, who was like a divine child, the one with the beautiful brows left the forest where she had first got to know Duhshanta.

'She went to the king, with her son with the brilliance of the morning sun, and entered. Having paid homage, Shakuntala said, "O king! This is your son. Let him be instated as the heir apparent. O king! This god-like son was begotten by you on me. O best of men! Now fulfil the promise you made to me. O immensely fortunate one! Remember the promise you made to me in Kanva's hermitage, when we united long ago." Having heard her words, the king remembered everything. But he said, "O evil ascetic! I remember nothing. Who do you belong to? I do not remember having had any relation with you for dharma, artha or kama. Go or stay, as you wish. Do what you want." Being thus addressed, the ascetic with the beautiful hips was ashamed. In her grief, she lost her senses and stood immobile like a pillar.

'Soon, her eyes turned as red as copper in anger. Her lips began to quiver. Through the sides of her eyes, she cast glances at the king that seemed to burn him. Though driven by wrath, she calmed her demeanour and the energy accumulated through her austerities. In grief and anger, she stood for a moment, collecting her thoughts. Then she looked straight at her husband and said, "O great king! Knowing everything very well,

how can you unconcernedly say that you know nothing, lying like a common person? Your heart knows the truth or falsity of my words. You yourself are the witness. Do what is good and do not degrade yourself. He who knows one thing in his mind, but represents it in another way, is a thief and robs his own self. What sin is he not capable of committing? You think that you are alone with your own self. But don't you know the ancient and omniscient one who dwells in your heart? He knows all your acts and all your evil deeds. It is in his presence that you lie. When sinning, a man thinks that no one sees him. But he is seen by the gods and by the being who dwells in every heart. The sun, moon, wind, fire, sky, earth, water, his heart, Yama, day, night, the two twilights and Dharma know man's every act. If the god in the heart, who is a witness to all acts, is pleased, Vaivasvata Yama ignores the evil a man has done. But when the great being is not pleased, Yama punishes the sinner for his evil deeds. He who degrades his own self and represents falsely cannot find refuge with the gods. He is not blessed by his own soul. I am a faithful wife to my husband. Do not disrespect me because I have come on my own. I am your wife and deserve to be treated with honour. In this assembly, why do you treat me as if I am a commoner? I am certainly not crying in the wilderness. Why do you not hear me? O Duhshanta! If you do not do what I am asking you to do, your head will today be splintered into a hundred pieces. The wise ones of ancient times knew that the husband himself entered the womb of his wife and emerged as a son. That is the reason a wife is known as *jaya*.[118] A son born to a learned man saves with his lineage the deceased ancestors. Since the son saves his ancestors from the hell known as *put*, the self-created one[119] has said that a son is known as *putra*. She is a true wife who looks after the house. She is a true wife who bears children. She is a true wife whose life is devoted to her husband. She is a true wife who is faithful to her husband. A wife is half the man. A wife is the best of friends. A wife is the source of the three objectives.[120] A wife is a friend at the very end. Those who have wives can perform rites. Those who have wives can be householders. Those who have wives are happy. Those who have wives have good fortune. Sweet-spoken wives are friends in solitude, fathers in religious acts and mothers in suffering. Even in the wilderness, a wife refreshes the wandering husband. A man who has a wife is trusted. Therefore, a wife is the best means of salvation. When a husband goes to the land of the dead and is transiting, it is the faithful wife alone who accompanies him there, for he is always her husband, in all adversities. If the wife goes before, she stays and waits for the spirit of her husband. If the husband dies before, the devoted wife soon follows. O king! It is for these reasons that man seeks marriage. The husband obtains a wife, in this life and the next. The wise have said that a man is himself born as his son. Therefore, a man should regard the mother of his son as his own mother. Looking at the face of a son born from a wife, a man sees his own face, as in a mirror, and is as delighted as a virtuous man on attaining heaven. Burnt through mental grief or afflicted with disease, men rejoice in

their wives, like perspiring ones do in water. Even in anger, a man should not utter unpleasant words to his beloved wife, because love, joy, virtue and everything are in her. The wife is the sacred ground in which the husband is born again. Even sages are unable to have offspring without wives. A son embraces his father, his limbs covered with dirt. Is there greater happiness to a father than that? Why do you frown and reject your son, who has come to you on his own and is glancing fondly at you? Even ants carry their eggs and do not break them. You are learned in the ways of dharma. Will you not support your own son? The touch of fragrances, women and water is not as pleasing as the embrace of one's own infant son. The Brahmana is the best among bipeds. The cow is the best among quadrupeds. The preceptor is the best among all superiors. The son is the best among all objects one touches. Let this handsome son touch you in embrace. There is no feeling more pleasant in the worlds than the touch of a son. O chastiser of enemies! O lord of kings! I bore this son, the dispeller of your grief, for three years. O descendant of the Puru lineage! When I was giving birth, a voice was heard from the sky, 'He will perform one hundred horse sacrifices.' Men who have gone to another village lovingly take up the sons of other men on their laps and feel great happiness on smelling their heads. At the time of the birth ceremony of a son, you know that Brahmanas utter the following mantra from the Vedas: 'You are born from my limbs. You are born from my heart. You are me in the form of a son. May you live for a hundred autumns. My life depends on you and my eternal lineage. Therefore, my son, live in happiness for a hundred autumns.' He has been born from your limbs, one man from another. Look on your son as your second self, like a reflection in a clear pond. Like the *ahavaniya* fire is kindled from the *garhapatya* fire,[121] this one has been born from you. Though you are one, you have been divided into two. O king! In earlier times, you were on a hunting expedition and had been led away by a deer. I was a virgin in my father's hermitage and was approached by you. The six supreme apsaras are Urvashi, Purvachitti, Sahajanya, Menaka, Vishvachi and Ghritachi. Among them again, Menaka, the apsara born from Brahma, is the foremost. Descending from heaven to earth, she gave birth to me through her union with Vishvamitra. The apsara Menaka gave birth to me in a plain in the Himalayas. Without any feelings, she abandoned me there, as if I was someone else's child. Earlier, what sins did I commit in another life that I was abandoned by my relatives in my childhood and by you now? Forsaken by you, I am ready to go back to my hermitage. But do not forsake this child who is your own son."

'Duhshanta said, "O Shakuntala! I do not know that this son born from you is mine. Women are liars. Who will believe your words? Your mother Menaka was a courtesan. She was merciless and abandoned you on the plains of the Himalayas, like a faded garland. Your father Vishvamitra was also merciless and was born in the Kshatriya lineage. But driven by desire, and lustful, he became a Brahmana. If Menaka is the best

of the apsaras and your father is the best of the maharshis, how can you speak like a harlot and be their daughter? Are you not ashamed to utter these disrespectful words, especially in my presence? O wicked ascetic! Go away. Where is that best of maharshis? Where is Menaka, the best of apsaras? And where are you, who are wretched, clad in an ascetic's garb? Your son is gigantic. And he is strong, even though a child. How has he, in such a short span, grown up like the trunk of a *shala* tree? You were born in a lowly lineage and you speak like a harlot. It seems that Menaka gave birth to you from lust alone. O ascetic! Everything that you say is unknown to me. I do not know you. Go away, as you please."'

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'Shakuntala said, "O king! You see the faults of others, even though they are as small as a mustard seed. But you do not see your own, even though they can be seen as large as a bilva fruit. Menaka is one of the thirty gods.[122] She is foremost among the thirty. O Duhshanta! My birth is nobler than your own. O lord of kings! You are established on earth. But I roam the sky. Know that the difference between you and me is that between a mustard seed and Mount Meru. O king! Behold and understand my powers. I can go to the abodes of the great Indra, Kubera, Yama and Varuna. O unblemished one! Not out of hatred towards you, but as an illustration, I am going to tell you a popular saying. Therefore, pardon me and listen. Until he sees his face in a mirror, the ugly man thinks himself to be more handsome than others. But when he sees his malformed face in a mirror, it is then that he realizes the difference between him and others. He who is extremely handsome never demeans others. He who slanders others a lot is only considered to be evil-mouthed. Like a pig searches out filth, the fool seeks out evil words when he hears good and evil in men's speech. But the swan always searches out milk from the water. Like that, the wise one seeks out words of quality when he hears good and evil in men's speech. Honest ones are always pained to speak ill of others. But wicked ones are satisfied at this. Good ones always find pleasure in paying respect to the aged.[123] However, fools always derive pleasure from berating good men. Those who seek no evil live happily. But fools are happy when they find evil. Even when they are injured by the words of evil ones, the good never do them injury. In this world, there is nothing more ridiculous than the evil representing the good as evil. Even those who do not believe in god fear those who have been dislodged from truth, like snakes with virulent poison, not to speak of those who believe in god. A man who has begotten a son like himself, but does not accept him, doesn't attain the superior worlds. The gods destroy his prosperity. The ancestors have said that the son establishes the family and the lineage and, thus, giving birth to a son is the best of all dharmas. Therefore, a son should never be abandoned. Manu has said there are sons begotten on one's wife and five others—obtained, bought, reared, adopted and those begotten on other women.

Sons support the dharma and fame of men and bring happiness to their hearts. Sons are like the boats of dharma in transporting the ancestors from hell. O tiger among kings! Therefore, it is not proper for you to forsake your son. O lord of the earth! Protect him like you protect yourself, truth and dharma. O lion among kings! It is not proper for you to be deceitful on this. A pond[124] is better than that of a hundred wells. A sacrifice is better than a hundred ponds. But a son is better than a hundred sacrifices. Truth is better than a hundred sons. If 1000 horse sacrifices and truth are weighed on a pair of scales, truth will weigh more than 1000 horse sacrifices. O king! I tell you that truth is equal to studying all the Vedas and bathing in all the tirthas. There is no dharma higher than the truth and nothing is superior to truth. And no evil is known to be fiercer than a lie. O king! Truth is the supreme brahman. Truth is the great vow. O king! Therefore, do not violate your oath. Let truth and yourself be united. However, if you are united with falsehood and if you yourself have no belief in my words, I shall go away from here on my own. A relationship with one like you should not be sought after. O Duhshanta! But when you are dead, my son will rule over the entire earth, crowned by the king of the mountains and surrounded by oceans in four directions."'

Vaishampayana said, 'Having uttered these words to the king, Shakuntala prepared to leave. Thereupon, a disembodied voice spoke to Duhshanta from the sky, as he sat surrounded by his officiating priests, his priest, his preceptors and his ministers. "O Duhshanta! The mother is only a vessel for holding water. Born from the father, the son is the father himself. O Duhshanta! Support your son and do not reject Shakuntala. O god among men! A son who has semen is the saver from Yama's abode. You are the creator of this embryo. Shakuntala has spoken the truth. The wife gives birth to a son by dividing her body into two. O king! O Duhshanta! Therefore, protect this son of yours, born from Shakuntala. To abandon one's own son and continue to live is a great misfortune. O descendant of the Puru lineage! Therefore, cherish this great-souled son of Shakuntala and Duhshanta. Since you will maintain this son because of these words, this son will be known as Bharata."[125] Having heard these words of those who dwell in the sky, the king of the Puru lineage was delighted. He addressed his priests and advisers, "All of you have heard what the messenger of the gods has to say. I myself know very well that this is my son. But if I had accepted him today as my son on her words alone, there would have been suspicion among all the people and he would never have been considered to be pure." O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The king was then cleared of all suspicion because of the words of the messenger of the gods. He was extremely pleased and accepted his son.

'He smelt his son's head and embraced him with affection. The Brahmanas pronounced their blessings on him and he was praised by the bards. The king then enjoyed the great happiness one feels at the touch of one's own son. Duhshanta also paid homage and accepted his wife according to the rites of dharma. The king pacified

her and told her, "O lady! My union with you was not known to the people. That is the reason I argued with you. It was natural for people to think that the union I had with you was because you were a woman and had my son been instated by me in the kingdom, he would have been considered to be impure. Therefore, I thought about how best to clear you. O beloved one! O large-eyed one! I have forgiven you all the harsh words you spoke in anger. I love you." O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Having thus spoken to his beloved queen, rajarshi Duhshanta honoured her with garments, food and drink. Thereupon, King Duhshanta instated Shakuntala's son as the heir apparent and the name of Bharata was conferred on him.

'From that day, the glorious wheel of the great-souled Bharata traversed the worlds with a great thunder, radiant, divine and invincible. He conquered all the kings of the earth and brought them under his sway. He always trod the path of dharma and attained supreme fame. That powerful king was known as Chakravarti[126] and Sarvabhouma. Like Indra, lord of the maruts, he performed many sacrifices. Like Daksha, he made Kanva the officiating priest at a sacrifice and offered a lot of alms. The fortunate one performed a horse sacrifice that was named after the large number of cows offered. At this, Bharata gave Kanva one thousand *padmas*[127] as the sacrificial fee. From Bharata springs the fame of the Bharata lineage and others of the Bharata lineage. All other kings who followed him were known as those of the Bharata lineage. In this Bharata lineage were born many greatly energetic and divine kings. They were supreme kings, like Brahma himself, and their many names are beyond recounting. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! I shall only mention the names of the chief ones, those who were immensely fortunate and devoted to truth and honesty. They were like the gods themselves.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'O unblemished one! O king! I will now recount to you in entirety the lineages of Prajapati Daksha, Vaivasvata Manu, Bharata, Kuru, Puru, Ajamidha and Yadava. These are great and holy accounts that lead to bliss. The histories of these illustrious ones bring wealth, fame and long life.

'Prachetas[128] had ten righteous sons, who were like maharshis in their energy and possessed a radiance that was ascending. They were known as the first ancestors. In earlier times, these greatly energetic ones were burnt with the lightning from clouds. O tiger among men! Daksha was born from Prachetas and from Daksha were born all subjects. Hence he is the grandfather of the worlds. He united with Virini and gave birth to 1000 sons, all rigid in their vows like he himself. In an assembly of these 1000 of Daksha's sons, Narada taught them the supreme philosophy of sankhya,[129] the means to salvation. O Janamejaya! In a desire to create more beings, Prajapati Daksha created

fifty women and accepted them as his daughters. He gave ten to Dharma, thirteen to Kashyapa and twenty-seven to Chandra, with the last given the task of reckoning time.

'Kashyapa was Marichi's son. Dakshayani was supreme among his thirteen wives. Through her, he gave birth to the valorous adityas, Indra and the others and also to Vivasvat. From Vivasvat was born a son, the lord Yama. O king! Martanda was born as Yama's son and Martanda had the wise lord Manu as his son. Manu's lineage became famous as that of men.[130] All men, including Brahmanas, Kshatriyas and others, were descended from Manu. O king! At that time, the Brahmanas were united with the Kshatriyas. The Brahmanas among men were devoted to the study of the Vedas and their branches. It is said that Manu[131] had ten mighty sons who were devoted to the pursuit of the Kshatriya dharma—Vena, Dhrishnu, Narishyanta, Nabhaga, Ikshvaku, Karusha, Saryati, Ila as the eighth and Prishadhra as the ninth. Nabhagarishtha was the tenth. In addition, Manu had fifty other sons on earth. But it is heard that they all quarrelled with each other and perished.

'The learned Pururava was born from Ila and it is said that she was both his father and mother. Pururava ruled over thirteen islands in the ocean. He was immensely famous and though human, was always surrounded by superhuman beings. Pururava was intoxicated with his valour and waged war against the Brahmanas. Paying no heed to their protests, he robbed them of their riches. O king! On seeing this, Sanatkumara came from Brahma's world and showed him the right way. But he did not accept this. At this, the maharshis were angry and cursed him. That king of men perished because of avarice, power and arrogance. He lived in the world of the gandharvas with Urvashi. He brought to the earth the three types of sacrificial fire. Through Urvashi, six sons were born to this son of Ila's—Ayus, Dhiman, Amavasu, Dridhayus, Vanayus and Shatayus. It is said that Ayus had five sons through Svarbhanu's daughter—Nahusha, Vriddhasharma, Raji, Rambha and Anenas. Nahusha was Ayus's son. He was wise and devoted to the truth. O lord of the earth! Following the dictates of dharma, he ruled over a large kingdom. Nahusha protected the ancestors, gods, rishis, Brahmanas, gandharvas, *uragas*[132] and rakshasas. He treated Brahmanas, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas equally. He killed hordes of *dasyus*[133] and made them pay tribute to the rishis. Like animals, that valorous one forced them to carry him on their backs. He overwhelmed the gods with his energy, austerities, valour and power and became like Indra himself. Through Priyavasa, Nahusha had six sons—Yati, Yayati, Samyati, Ayati, Pancha and Uddhava.

'Nahusha's son Yayati was devoted to the truth and became an emperor. He ruled over the entire earth and performed many sacrifices. With great power, he worshipped the ancestors and the gods, who were always present. Yayati was always invincible and showed great kindness towards his subjects. His sons were great archers who possessed all the qualities. O great king! They were born from his wives, Devayani and

Sharmishtha. From Devayani were born Yadu and Turvasu. From Sharmishtha were born Druhyu, Anu and Puru. O king! In accordance with dharma, he ruled over his subjects for a long time. Then he was attacked by the dreadful old age and he lost his beauty. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Having been overcome by old age, the king told his sons Yadu, Puru, Turvasu, Druhyu and Anu, "O sons! I desire to savour the pleasures of youth. As a young man, I wish to spend my time with young women. Help me." Yadu, the eldest son and born from Devayani, replied, "For what purpose do you want our youth? What act do you wish to perform?" Yayati told him, "Accept my old age from me. With your youth, I will satisfy my senses. During a long sacrifice, I was cursed by the sage Ushanas. Therefore, I have lost all my powers of enjoying desire. O sons! I am suffering because of this. Any one of you can rule over the kingdom with my body. And I will satisfy my desire by taking up a new and young body." Yadu and the other brothers did not agree to take up his old age.

'At this, the youngest son, Puru, always devoted to the truth and powerful, said, "O king! Enjoy yourself with a new and young body. As you command, I will take up your old age and rule over the kingdom." At these words, the rajarshi[134] used the power of his austerities to transfer his old age to his great-souled son. The king again became a young man with Puru's age. Puru ruled over the kingdom with Yayati's age. After a thousand years, the invincible Yayati had still not satisfied his desires and told his son Puru, "You are my heir. You are the son through whom my lineage will continue. From now on, my lineage will be known in this world as Puru's lineage." O tiger among kings! Then he instated Puru as the king. After a long time, he succumbed to the laws of time.'

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Janamejaya asked, 'Our ancestor Yayati was tenth in the line from Prajapati. How did he obtain Shukra's daughter,[135] who was difficult to obtain? O supreme among Brahmanas! I wish to hear this in detail. Also tell me separately and in detail the accounts of the chiefs of the Puru lineage.'

Vaishampayana said, 'O Janamejaya! Yayati was a rajarshi who was as radiant as the king of the gods himself. I will answer your question and tell you how, in ancient times, Shukra and Vrishaparva gave him their daughters and how the union between Devayani and Nahusha's son Yayati took place. Many years ago, a great fight occurred between the gods and the demons over who would rule over the three worlds, with all their movable and immovable riches. In a desire to obtain victory, the gods appointed the son of Angirasa,[136] who was a sage, as the priest for their sacrifices. The others[137] appointed the wise Ushanas.[138] These two Brahmanas were bitter rivals. The gods killed all the demons who had assembled for battle. But they were revived by Kavya

with his knowledge. Having thus been brought to life, they fought with the gods again. In turn, the demons killed many gods in battle. However, though immensely learned, Brihaspati could not revive them. He did not possess the knowledge known as *sanjivani*[139] that the valorous Kavya possessed. Thus, the gods were immersed in supreme misery.

'In great anxiety and afraid of Kavya Ushanas, the gods went to Brihaspati's eldest son Kacha and said, "Worship us as we worship you. Please help us in this supreme task. That Brahmana with unlimited energy possesses knowledge. Quickly bring us that knowledge from Shukra and you will have a share in all sacrificial offerings made to us. You will find the Brahmana with Vrishaparva.[140] He always protects the demons, but does not protect those who are not demons. You are younger than him. Therefore, you can worship that wise one. You can also pay homage to Devayani, the beloved daughter of that great-souled one. You alone are capable. There is no one else. You are certain to obtain the knowledge by propitiating Devayani with your conduct, magnanimity, sweetness, action and self-control." Having been thus honoured and addressed by the gods, Kacha, Brihaspati's son, agreed. He then went to Vrishaparva.

'O king! Having been thus sent by the gods, he soon arrived at the capital of the king of the demons. On seeing Shukra there, he said, "O illustrious one! Please accept me as your disciple. I am the grandson of Angirasa and the son of Brihaspati. I am known by the name of Kacha. Accepting you as my supreme preceptor, I will practise brahmacharya for a thousand years. Therefore, allow me." Shukra replied, "O Kacha! You are extremely welcome and I will accept your words. You deserve respect and I will treat you with respect. Because, by doing that, Brihaspati will also be honoured." Shukra Ushanas, the son of Kavi, commanded Kacha to take the vow and he did so. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Accepting the vow and the duration of the vow, as he had promised, he began to worship his preceptor and Devayani. The young man was at the peak of his youth and pleased Devayani with his constant worship, singing, dancing and the playing of musical instruments. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Devayani was a maiden who had just attained the bloom of her youth and he pleased her through his conduct and offerings of flowers and fruit. The Brahmana rigidly stuck to his vows and when they were alone, Devayani also sang with him and sported with him. Five hundred years passed in this fashion and Kacha stuck to his vows. Then the danavas came to know that he was Kacha.

'One day, they saw him alone in the forest when he was tending to the cattle. Without hesitation, out of hatred for Brihaspati and in a desire to protect the knowledge, they killed him. After killing him, they chopped him up into pieces as small as sesamum seeds and fed it to jackals and wolves. The cows returned home without the cowherd. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When Devayani saw that the cows had returned home from the forest without Kacha, she immediately said, "O lord! The sun has set and

the agnihotra fire[141] has not yet been lit. The cows have returned without the cowherd and Kacha is not to be seen. O father! It is certain that Kacha must have died or been killed. I tell you truthfully that I cannot live without him." Shukra replied, "If he is dead, I will revive him by uttering the words: 'Come back to life'." With the aid of the knowledge of sanjivani, he summoned Kacha. Having been thus summoned, Kacha joyfully reappeared. When the Brahmana's daughter asked him, he said that he had been killed. On another occasion, at Devayani's request, the Brahmana Kacha again went to the forest to collect flowers. The danavas saw him and killed him a second time. The asuras burnt him, ground the ashes and mixed them with wine, feeding this to the Brahmana.[142]Devayani again spoke to her father, "O father! Kacha was sent to gather flowers. But he cannot be seen." Shukra replied, "O daughter! Kacha is Brihaspati's son and he has gone to the land of the dead. Though revived by my knowledge, he has again been killed. What shall I do? O Devayani! Do not grieve and do not weep. Someone like you should not grieve over a mortal man. The gods and the entire world must accept that which comes." Devayani said, "The oldest Angirasa is his grandfather. Brihaspati, blessed with the power of austerities, is his father. He is the son and the grandson of a rishi. Why should I not grieve and weep? He himself is a brahmachari blessed with the power of austerities. He is always attentive and skilled in every work. I will happily follow the path that Kacha has trod on. O father! I love the handsome Kacha." Shukra replied, "It is certain that the asuras hate me. They have killed my innocent disciple. These terrible danavas want to make me a non-Brahmana. The killing of a Brahmana oppresses Indra himself. Let this evil come to an end now." Having been spurred by Devayani, maharshi Kavya again summoned Kacha, Brihaspati's son.

'Summoned by the knowledge, but scared about his preceptor's safety, Kacha softly replied from inside the stomach. Shukra then asked him, "O Brahmana! How did you come to be inside my stomach? Tell me truly." Kacha replied, "Through your grace, my memory has remained with me. I remember exactly what happened and how and can therefore bear this unending misery and insufferable pain. O Kavya! The asuras killed me. They burnt me and ground and mixed the ashes with wine, which they then gave you. But when you are there, how can the asuras' powers of delusion overcome the powers of a Brahmana?" Shukra said, "O daughter! How can I now do what is dear to you? Kacha can only be brought to life through my death. O Devayani! Kacha is inside me. He can only reappear by ripping my stomach apart." Devayani said, "Both the sorrows will burn me like fire—your destruction and Kacha's. I will have no protection after Kacha's death. And if you die, I will not be able to bear life." Shukra replied, "O Brihaspati's son! You have attained success, since Devayani worships you so much. Unless you are Indra in Kacha's disguise, accept today the knowledge of bringing the dead back to life. No one can emerge alive from my stomach, but a Brahmana cannot be killed. Therefore, accept the knowledge I give you. Return to life as my son. O son!

Possessed of the knowledge that I give you, bring me back to life after I leave my body. When you emerge from my stomach with the knowledge your preceptor gives you, act in accordance with dharma." Receiving the knowledge from his preceptor, the Brahmana emerged from the stomach. The handsome Kacha emerged from the Brahmana's right side, like the full moon in shuklapaksha.[143] He saw his preceptor's remains, lying in a heap of Brahmana powers. Kacha revived him with the secret knowledge he had received.

'Then Kacha paid homage to his preceptor and said, "The preceptor is an object of worship. The giver of knowledge is supreme. He is the most precious of all precious objects in the four directions. He who doesn't revere him is never established and goes to the worlds of the evil." Having been deceived through drinking wine and remembering the terrible consequences of losing consciousness, and also seeing the reappearance of the handsome Kacha whom he had drunk when intoxicated with wine, the mighty Kavya arose in anger. He wished to bring about the welfare of Brahmanas. The illustrious one himself spoke this injunction against the drinking of wine. "From this day, if a stupid Brahmana commits the crime of drinking wine, he will be considered to have committed the crime of killing a Brahmana. He will be hated in this world and the next. I am laying down this dharma for Brahmanas in all the worlds. Let this be heard by good Brahmanas who worship their preceptors, by the gods and by all the worlds." Having said this, the illustrious repository of immeasurable ascetic powers summoned the danavas, who had been deprived of their senses by destiny. Having summoned them, he said, "O danavas! You are strong. But know that Kacha has obtained his wish and will live with me. Having obtained the great knowledge of sanjivani, the Brahmana is now as powerful as Brahma himself." Kacha lived for a thousand years in his preceptor's house. With his preceptor's permission, he then prepared to return to the land of the thirty gods.'

72

Vaishampayana said, 'When the period of his vow was over and he had obtained his preceptor's permission, Kacha prepared to leave for the land of the thirty gods.

'Devayani told him, "O grandson of rishi Angirasa! You are dazzling in your conduct, birth, learning, austerities and self-control. Just as the immensely famous rishi Angirasa is honoured by my father, so must I worship and honour Brihaspati. O one blessed with the power of austerities! Know this and hear what I have to say. You are aware of my behaviour while the rigid observance of your vow was going on. You have now achieved your learning. I love you and you should love me in return. Accept my hand in accordance with the proper rites and mantras." Kacha replied, "O unblemished lady! You are an object of my honour and worship, as your illustrious father is. You are an object of greater reverence to me. You are dearer to the great-souled Bhargava[144] than his own life. O fortunate one! You are my preceptor's daughter and, in accordance with

dharma, I must always worship you. Just as your father Shukra, my preceptor, is always honoured by me, so must I always honour you. O Devayani! You should therefore not speak to me in this way." Devayani replied, "O supreme among Brahmanas! You are not my father's son. You are only the son of his preceptor's son.[145] Therefore, you are an object of my honour and worship. O Kacha! You must remember the love I showed you when the asuras killed you again and again, and even now. O you who know dharma! Remembering my friendship, love and devotion towards you, you should not forsake me when I love you and have not shown any guilt." Kacha replied, "You are pure in our vows. But you are now asking me to be engaged in a task that is not recommended. O lovely one with the beautiful brows! You are greater to me than my preceptor. Be gracious. O lady with the large eyes! O lady with a face like the moon! O fortunate one! You have dwelt in Kavya's loins and I have dwelt in the same place. O one with the fair face! According to dharma, you are my sister. O fortunate one! Do not say that. I have lived here happily and I hold no bad feelings. I ask your permission to leave. Bless me on my way. Remember me in your conversations as someone who has never transgressed dharma. Always serve my preceptor with single-minded alertness." Devayani said, "O Kacha! If you spurn me for the sake of dharma, artha or kama, despite my asking, your knowledge will never achieve success." Kacha replied, "You are my preceptor's daughter and there is no sin in refusing you. Nor has my preceptor given me instructions about this. Curse me if you so wish. O Devayani! I have told you the dharma the sages have decreed. I deserve no curse. Nevertheless, you have cursed me, not out of dharma, but out of desire. Therefore, your desire will never be satisfied. No rishi's son will ever accept your hand. You have said that my knowledge will never bear fruit. So be it. But it will bear fruit for the one I teach it to."

'Having said this to Devayani, Kacha, the best among Brahmanas, supreme among Brahmanas, quickly left for the abode of the thirty gods. On seeing him arrive, the gods, with Indra at their head, were delighted. They paid homage to Brihaspati and told Kacha, "You have performed a supreme and extraordinary act for our welfare and your fame will never diminish. You will have a share in our sacrificial offerings."'

73

Vaishampayana said, 'O bull of the Bharata lineage! The gods were delighted that Kacha had attained the knowledge. They learnt the knowledge that Kacha had learnt and were content. They assembled together and told Shatakratu,[146] "O Purandara![147] The time has come to display your valour and kill your enemies." Having been thus addressed, Maghavan[148] agreed and set out with the assemblage of thirty gods. He saw many women in the forest. The ladies were sporting in a forest that was like Chitraratha's.[149] Changing himself into the wind, he mixed up all their garments. After emerging from

the water, the women then each picked up a garment that was nearest her. Devayani's garment was then picked up by Sharmishtha, the daughter of Vrishaparva, who did not know about the mixing up. O lord of kings! At that, a quarrel arose between Devayani and Sharmishtha. Devayani said, "O asuri! Despite being inferior to me,[150] how did you dare to take up my garment? You are devoid of good conduct. No good will come to you." Sharmishtha replied, "Whether my father is seated or lying down, your father is always humbly below him and always praises him. You are the daughter of a man who begs, praises and holds up his hand for alms. I am the daughter of a man who is praised and stretches out his hand to give alms, not to receive. You are defenceless and deserted. You are a beggar who trembles before me, who is armed. Find an equal. I do not regard you as one." On hearing this, Devayani stood up erect and clung to the garment. But Sharmishtha threw her into a well and went off to her city. The evil Sharmishtha took her to be dead. In extreme anger, she did not even bother to look down.

'Nahusha's son, Yayati, came to that place, looking for deer to hunt. He was thirsty and his two horses were tired. Nahusha's son saw a well in which there was no water. But the king saw a maiden who was as radiant as the flames of a fire. Seeing her there, he addressed the maiden who was celestial in beauty. The best of kings pacified her with extremely soft words and asked, "O one with nails the shade of copper! O one with the dusky complexion! O one adorned in beautiful gems and earrings! Who are you? Why are you in such deep grief? Why are you sighing in distress? How did you come to fall into this well that is full of creepers and grass? O one with the slender waist! Whose daughter are you? Tell me truly." Devayani replied, "I am Shukra's daughter, who uses his knowledge to revive the daityas when they are killed by the gods. He does not know what has become of me. O king! Here is my right hand, with nails that are the shade of copper. You seem to have been born into a good family. I know you to be gentle, brave and famous. Grasp me by the hand and pull me out of the well into which I have fallen." Having learnt that she was the daughter of a Brahmana, the king, who was Nahusha's son, grasped her by the right hand and pulled her out of the well. After pulling the one with beautiful hips out of the well, Yayati gently bid farewell and returned to his capital.

'Devayani said, "O Ghurnika![151] Quickly go to my father and tell him what has happened. From now on, I refuse to enter Vrishaparva's city." Ghurnika swiftly went to the asura's palace. On seeing Kavya, she spoke to him, her senses flustered. "O immensely wise one! O immensely fortunate one! I tell you that Devayani has been struck in the forest by Sharmishtha, Vrishaparva's daughter." Having heard that his daughter had been struck by Sharmishtha, Kavya quickly set out for the forest with a heavy heart. When he found his daughter Devayani in the forest, he engulfed her in his arms and sorrowfully said, "It is through their own faults that people reap happiness and sorrow. I am sure that you must have done something wrong, which has now been

purged.” Devayani replied, “Whether it is the purging of my fault or not, listen attentively to what Sharmishtha, Vrishaparva’s daughter, told me. I am telling you truthfully. She said that you chanted praises to the daityas. With eyes red in anger and a harsh and sharp voice, this is what Vrishaparva’s daughter, Sharmishtha, said. She said that I was the daughter of someone who always begged, chanted the praises of others and stretched out his hand for alms. And she was the daughter of one who was always praised, always granted and stretched out his hand to give alms. Eyes red with anger and full of pride, this is what Sharmishtha, Vrishaparva’s daughter, repeatedly said. O father! If I am really the daughter of one who chants praises of others and stretches out his hand for alms, I must pay homage to Sharmishtha to obtain her favour. I have already told my friend[152] that.” Shukra replied, “O Devayani! You are not the daughter of someone who always praises, asks for alms and receives. You are the daughter of someone who is always praised, but never praises. Vrishaparva knows this and so do Shakra and the king who is Nahusha’s son. Know my strength to be as inconceivable and incomparable as the supreme brahman.”’

74

‘Shukra said, “O Devayani! Know that a man who pays no heed to the evil words of others conquers everything. The learned regard as a true charioteer he who reins in his anger like horses, not he who hangs onto the reins tightly. O Devayani! Know that he who restrains his rising anger through feelings of non-anger conquers everything. A man who restrains his anger through forgiveness is compared to a snake that casts off its old skin. He who is not hurt through the evil words of others and does not retaliate attains all the objects of life. Between two men, one who performs sacrifices continuously every month for a hundred years and one who does not feel anger, the one without anger is the superior one. Young boys and girls are not always sensible and quarrel with each other. They do not know true strength or weakness. The wise never imitate them.”

‘Devayani replied, “O father! Even though I am a girl, I know what is virtue and what is duty. I also know the difference between anger and forgiveness and the strength and weakness of each. But when a disciple behaves disrespectfully towards a preceptor, it should not be condoned. I do not wish to live among people whose conduct is unbecoming. A wise man who desires welfare should not live among people with evil intent, who speak ill of high birth and good conduct. It is said that the best place to live is among honest ones, where high birth and good conduct are known and respected. I can think of nothing more intolerable in the three worlds than the terrible and evil words of Vrishaparva’s daughter. It is the inferior one who thrives on the success of a rival.”’

75

Vaishampayana said, ‘Kavya, the best of the Bhrigu lineage, was very angry. He went to the place where Vrishaparva was seated and unhesitatingly told him, “O king! Unlike a cow, the fruits of evil actions are not immediate. Such fruits are certainly manifested, if not in one’s own self, in one’s son or in one’s grandson. They are like a heavy meal in the stomach. You killed the Brahmana Kacha, descended from Angirasa, when he lived with me, even though he was devoted to dharma, committed no sin and served me. You killed one who did not deserve to die. You caused injury to my daughter. O Vrishaparva! For this reason, I have to forsake you and your relatives. O king! I can no longer live with you in your territory. O daitya! Do not take me to be one who utters a falsehood. Why do you overlook the faults of your own and do not check them?”

‘Vrishaparva said, “O descendant of the Bhrigu lineage! Never have I known falsehood or non-adherence to dharma in you. Dharma and truth are established in you. O illustrious one! Please show me your grace. O descendant of the Bhrigu lineage! If you forsake us and depart, we will have no refuge and will drown in the ocean.” Shukra replied, “O asura! I do not care whether you sink to the bottom of the ocean or disappear in the various directions. I cannot tolerate any unpleasant act directed at my daughter, whom I love. Pacify Devayani, because my life is based on her. Just as Brihaspati ensures Indra’s welfare, my ascetic powers are for your protection.” Vrishaparva replied, “O descendant of the Bhrigu lineage! You are the master of everything that belongs to the lord of the asuras—riches, elephants, cattle, horses. You are their lord, even of me.” Shukra said, “O great asura! If it is true that I am the lord of everything that is possessed by the lord of the daityas, go and try to pacify Devayani.” Devayani said, “O descendant of the Bhrigu lineage! O father! If you are really the lord of all the wealth of the king and he himself, ask the king to come to me and state it himself. Otherwise, I won’t accept it.”[153] Vrishaparva said, “O Devayani! O one with the beautiful smile! I will give you whatever you desire to possess, regardless of how difficult it is to obtain.” Devayani replied, “I desire that Sharmishtha, together with 1000 other ladies, should be my maid servants. She must also follow me when my father gives my hand in marriage.” Vrishaparva said, “O nurse! Quickly go and fetch Sharmishtha here. She must do whatever Devayani wishes.” The nurse then went and told Sharmishtha, “O fortunate one! Arise and do what is good for your relatives. Urged by Devayani, the Brahmana is about to forsake his disciples. O unblemished one! You must now do exactly what Devayani wishes.” Sharmishtha replied, “I will today do exactly what she desires. Because of me, Shukra and Devayani must not leave.” Commanded by her father, she then quickly emerged from the supreme palace on a palanquin, accompanied by 1000 maidens.

‘Sharmishtha said, “I am your maid servant and will serve you, with 1000 other slaves. I will follow you wherever your father bestows you.” Devayani retorted, “I am the daughter of one who chants praises, begs and stretches out his hand for alms. You

are the daughter of one who is praised. How can you be my slave?” Sharmishtha replied, “Whatever be the way, one must be prepared to bring about the welfare of one’s afflicted relatives. I will follow you wherever your father bestows you.” O best of kings! When Vrishaparva’s daughter promised to be her slave, Devayani told her father, “O supreme among Brahmanas! I will now enter the capital. I know that your knowledge and the strength of your learning are invincible.” Having been thus addressed by his daughter, the immensely famous one, the best of Brahmanas, was pleased and entered the city. All the danavas paid him homage.’

76

Vaishampayana said, ‘O best of kings! After a long time, the beautiful Devayani went to the same forest to play. With Sharmishtha and the 1000 maid servants, she reached the same spot and began to roam around as she pleased. Being attended by all those friends, she felt very happy. All of them sported in abandon, drinking the nectar from *madhavi* creepers, eating diverse food and biting into fruit. In search of deer to hunt, the king who was Nahusha’s son again came to the same place, exhausted and thirsty. He saw Devayani and Sharmishtha, with all those ladies. They were drinking and languid, adorned in celestial ornaments. He saw the sweet-smiling Devayani seated there. Among all those beautiful women, she was unparalleled in her loveliness. She was waited upon by Sharmishtha, who was massaging her feet.

‘Yayati said, “It seems that these 1000 women are surrounding the two of you. O beautiful ones! Tell me your names and your clans.” Devayani replied, “O ruler of men! Hear my words and know that I am the daughter of Shukra, the preceptor of the asuras. This friend is my slave. She goes wherever I go. She is Sharmishtha, the daughter of Vrishaparva, the king of the danavas.” Yayati asked, “This maiden is beautiful. She has lovely eyebrows. I am curious to know how this daughter of the asura king, your friend, has come to be your slave.” Devayani replied, “O tiger among men! Everything follows what has been destined. Do not be surprised at what seems to be out of the ordinary and know that everything is determined by destiny. Your form and attire is like that of a king. Your speech is like that of one who knows the Vedas. What is your name? Where have you come from? Whose son are you? Tell me.” Yayati replied, “During my years of brahmacharya, the entire knowledge of the Vedas penetrated my ears. I am a king and the son of a king. I am known as Yayati.” Devayani asked, “O king! Why have you come to this region? Is it to gather lotuses or hunt for deer?” Yayati replied, “O fortunate one! I came to hunt for deer and came here to search for water. You speak a lot. Please allow me to leave now.” Devayani said, “With the slave Sharmishtha, the two of us and 1000 maid servants are at your command to serve you. O fortunate one! Please be my friend and husband.” Yayati replied, “O beautiful one! I am not worthy of you. You are the daughter of Ushanas. O Devayani! Your father cannot marry you to a

king.” Devayani replied, “Brahmanas have already been united with Kshatriyas and Kshatriyas have been united with Brahmanas. You are a rishi and the son of a rishi. O son of Nahusha! Therefore, marry me.” Yayati replied, “O beautiful one! There is no doubt that the four varnas have sprung from a single body. But their purity varies and so does their dharma. The Brahmana is superior to the others.” Devayani said, “O son of Nahusha! Earlier, no man except you has ever touched my hand. Therefore, in accordance with the dharma of accepting the hand, I accept you as my husband. My hand has been touched by you, who are a rishi and the son of a rishi. How can a proud one like me allow any other man to touch my hand?” Yayati replied, “The learned men know that a Brahmana is more to be avoided than a virulently poisonous and angry snake or a blazing fire that spreads in all directions.” Devayani asked, “O bull among men! Why do you say that a Brahmana is more to be avoided than a virulently poisonous and angry snake or a blazing fire that spreads in all directions?” Yayati replied, “The snake kills only one. The sharpest weapon kills only one. But if angry, a Brahmana can destroy many cities and kingdoms. O timid one! Therefore, I think that it is harder to fend off a Brahmana. O fortunate one! I cannot marry you unless your father bestows you on me.”

‘Devayani said, “O king! I have chosen you. It is agreed that my father will bestow me on you and you will marry me. You need have no fear you have not asked for me. You will receive what is given to you.” Devayani quickly sent a message to her father. On hearing this, Bhrigu’s descendant went to meet the king. On seeing Shukra come, Yayati, the lord of the earth, paid homage to the Brahmana Kavya with joined palms, worshipped him and waited. Devayani said, “O father! This is the king who is Nahusha’s son. He grasped my hand when I was in trouble. Bestow me to him. I will accept no one else in the world as my husband.” Shukra said, “O son of Nahusha! You are brave. You have been chosen by my beloved daughter as her husband. I give her to you. Accept her as your queen.” Yayati replied, “O descendant of the Bhrigu lineage! I seek a boon from you. Let no great sin descend on me as a consequence of my begetting offspring of mixed caste.” Shukra said, “I free you from this non-adherence to dharma. You will receive your desired boon. No sin will befall you as a result of this marriage. Maintain the slender-waisted Devayani as your wife in accordance with dharma. With her, may you find incomparable happiness. O king! Always respect this maiden Sharmishtha, Vrishaparva’s daughter, and you must never call her to your bed.” Having been thus addressed, Yayati circumambulated Shukra. With the great-souled one’s permission, he returned happily to his own city.’

## 77

Vaishampayana said, ‘Yayati’s capital resembled Indra’s capital. He entered his capital and instated Devayani in the women’s quarters. There was a grove of *ashoka* trees

nearby. With Devayani's permission, he instated Vrishaparva's daughter in a house that he built there. He honoured asuri Sharmishtha with 1000 maid servants and made good arrangements for her food and clothing. Like the gods, the king who was Nahusha's son, passed many happy years in Devayani's company. When her season arrived, the beautiful Devayani conceived and gave birth to a boy as her first child.

'When a thousand years had passed, Vrishaparva's daughter Sharmishtha saw that having attained youth, her season had arrived. She began to think, "My season has arrived, but I do not yet have a husband. What will happen? What shall I do? What is proper for me to do? Devayani has given birth, but my youth is in vain. I shall choose as my husband the same person and in the same way as her. I am certain in my mind that the king will give me a son. Will the one who is devoted to righteous conduct come and meet me in private?" On one occasion, the king emerged and came to the ashoka grove. On seeing Sharmishtha there, he came and stood before her. The sweet-smiling Sharmishtha found the king alone before her. She greeted the king with joined palms and said, "O son of Nahusha! No one can touch the women who dwell in the inner quarters of Soma, Indra, Vishnu, Yama, Varuna and you. O king! Know that I am beautiful, have been born in a good lineage and show good conduct. O ruler of men! I seek your favour for my season." Yayati replied, "I know about your conduct, since you are an unblemished maiden born among the daityas. I can also see your beauty. I do not even see a blemish that is as small as the point of a needle. However, when I married Devayani, Kavya Ushanas told me that Vrishaparva's daughter should never be in my bed." Sharmishtha said, "O king! It is no sin to commit a falsehood in five cases—in jest, to women, at the time of marriage, when confronting death and when all one's riches are liable to be lost. O lord of men! It is true that he who bears false witness is demeaned. When a general purpose is sought to be attained, only then does a falsehood harm the speaker." Yayati replied, "A king must be a role model to his subjects and if it is proven that he lied, destruction follows. I cannot afford to lie, even when I am confronted with the greatest loss." Sharmishtha said, "O king! It is held that one's husband and one's friend's husband are closely related. A friend's marriage is equal to one's own. I have chosen my friend's husband as mine." Yayati replied, "The vow I have taken is that the gift should match the one who asks. You are asking my favour. Tell me what I should do?" Sharmishtha said, "O king! Save me from sin and protect my dharma.[154] If I conceive a child through you, I will perform the most righteous act in the world. O king! It is decreed that three people can never own—a wife, a slave and a son. Whatever they obtain belongs to the one who owns them. O king! I am Devayani's slave and that descendant of the Bhrigu lineage is yours. She and I are equally yours. Love me as I love you." Having been thus addressed, the king was persuaded.

'He paid honour to Sharmishtha and protected her dharma. He united with Sharmishtha and satisfied their desires. Then they lovingly bade farewell and returned

to where they had come from. As a consequence of the union with that best of kings, Sharmishtha, with the sweet smile and beautiful eyebrows, conceived her first child. O king! In due time, the one with eyes like blue lotuses gave birth to a son. He was like the son of a god, with eyes that had the complexion of blue lotuses.'

Vaishampayana said, 'O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When the sweet-smiling Devayani heard of this birth of a son, she unhappily began to think about Sharmishtha. Devayani went to Sharmishtha and said, "O one with the beautiful eyebrows! What sin have you committed out of desire?" Sharmishtha replied, "A rishi arrived. He was devoted to dharma and learned in the Vedas. In accordance with dharma, I asked for a boon and he gave it to me. O one with the sweet smile! I did not fall prey to sin so as to satiate my desire. I tell you truthfully that I obtained this son through the rishi." Devayani said, "O timid one! If that is the case, it is all right. I wish to know the name, lineage and birth of that Brahmana." Sharmishtha replied, "O one with the beautiful smile! He was as radiant in energy as the sun. On seeing him, I was powerless to ask these questions." Devayani said, "O Sharmishtha! If all this is true and you have indeed obtained this son from such a superior and great Brahmana, I have no reason to be angry." They conversed and laughed happily with each other. Believing literally what she had been told, Bhrigu's descendant[155] went home.

'O king! Yayati had two sons through Devayani—Yadu and Turvasu. Those two were like Shakra[156] and Vishnu. Through that rajarshi, Vrishaparva's daughter Sharmishtha gave birth to three sons—Druhyu, Anu and Puru.

'O king! One day, the sweet-smiling Devayani went with Yayati to a great forest. She saw three divine looking children playing there, without any care in the world. Devayani was surprised and asked, "O king! Whose children are these handsome ones? They look like sons of the gods. They look exactly like you in form and radiance." Having asked the king, she asked the boys, "O sons! What is the name of your lineage? Which Brahmana is your father? Tell me truthfully. I wish to hear it all." The children pointed at the supreme king with their fingers and said that Sharmishtha was their mother. Having said this, they came up to the king. But with Devayani there, the king dared not greet them. The boys then wept in sorrow and went to their mother, Sharmishtha. On witnessing the love the boys displayed towards the king, the queen understood and asked Sharmishtha, "You are owned by me. How have you dared to do that which brings displeasure to me? You have reverted to the dharma of the asuras. Do you have no fear?" Sharmishtha replied, "O one with the beautiful smile! What I told you about the rishi is true. My acts were in accordance with dharma and propriety. Therefore, why should I be afraid of you? O beautiful one! You chose the king as your husband. So did I. According to dharma, a friend's husband is one's own husband. You are the daughter of a Brahmana. Therefore, as my superior, you deserve my honour and respect. But don't you know that this rajarshi is deserving of greater honour?" On hearing these words, Devayani said, "O king! You have caused me displeasure. I will not live here any longer." Having said this, the dusky one quickly arose, with tears in her eyes. In a miserable state, she went to her father Kavya.

‘Extremely alarmed, the king followed her, trying to pacify her wrath. But she did not return. Her eyes were red with anger. She did not speak a word to the king. With eyes full of tears, she soon reached Kavya Ushanas. On seeing her father, she paid him homage and stood before him. Yayati followed soon after and also paid homage to Bhrigu’s descendant. Devayani said, “Evil has won over dharma. The inferior have ascended and the superior brought down. I have been overtaken by Sharmishtha, Vrishaparva’s daughter. This king, Yayati, has fathered three sons through that wretched woman. But I have got only two sons. O descendant of the Bhrigu lineage! This king is famous for his knowledge of dharma. O Kavya! Nevertheless, I tell you that he has crossed the threshold.” Shukra said, “O great king! You know dharma well. Yet, you have committed sin for the sake of pleasure. Therefore, invincible old age will soon oppress you.” Yayati replied, “O illustrious one! The daughter of the lord of the danavas begged me to make her season bear fruit. It was with that thought, and no other, that I did what I thought was right. Those who know the brahman say that a man who is asked by a woman for the fruition of her season must grant her wish. Otherwise, he commits the sin of killing an embryo. A man who refuses when a desiring woman privately solicits him, is called a killer of an embryo by the learned. O descendant of the Bhrigu lineage! It is for these reasons, concerned about committing a sin, that I went to Sharmishtha.” Shukra said, “O king! You are dependent on me. You should have awaited my instructions. O son of Nahusha! By committing a falsehood, you have become a thief in the eyes of dharma.” Being thus cursed by the angry Ushanas, Yayati, son of Nahusha, was instantly deprived of his earlier youth and old age overcame him.

‘Yayati said, “O descendant of the Bhrigu lineage! I am not yet satiated with Devayani’s youth. O Brahmana! Therefore, show me mercy and let old age not overcome me now.” Shukra replied, “I never utter a falsehood. O ruler of the earth! You have been instantly attacked by old age. But if you wish, you can transfer this old age to another.” Yayati said, “O Brahmana! Then agree to this. A son of mine who will grant me his youth will enjoy my kingdom, my merit and my fame.” Shukra replied, “O son of Nahusha! If you think of me, you will be able to transfer your old age to whomsoever you wish. No evil will befall you from that. The son who will give you his youth will become the king. He will have a long life and numerous offspring and will attain fame.”’

79

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having been attacked by old age, Yayati returned to his capital. He summoned his eldest and best son Yadu and said, “O son! Old age, wrinkles and grey hair have overcome me, because of a curse imposed by Kavya Ushanas. But I am not yet satiated with youth. O Yadu! Take upon yourself this guilt and the consequent old age. I can then enjoy pleasures with your youth. When 1000 years have passed, I shall return

your youth to you and take over the guilt and the consequent old age." Yadu replied, "O king! White hair and beard, cheerlessness, flabbiness, wrinkles on the body, ugliness, weakness, thinness, incapacity to work, defeat by the young and forsaking by those who depend on you—I do not wish for this old age." Yayati said, "O son! You were born from my heart, but you will not give your youth to me. Therefore, your offspring will have no share in the kingdom. O Turvasu! O son! Take upon yourself this guilt and the consequent old age. I wish to enjoy pleasures with your youth. When 1000 years have passed, I shall return your youth to you and take over the guilt and the consequent old age." Turvasu replied, "O father! I do not desire old age. It destroys all desire, pleasure, strength, beauty, intelligence and even life." Yayati said, "You were born from my heart, but will not give your youth to me. O Turvasu! Therefore, your lineage will become extinct. O foolish one! You will be a king over subjects whose conduct and practices will be impure. Women of superior birth will marry men of inferior birth. They will live on meat and lust after and cohabit with their preceptors' wives and animals. The evil ones will follow the conduct of animals and behave like mlecchas." Thus did Yayati curse Turvasu, his son.

'Yayati then spoke to Sharmishtha's son Druhyu. "O Druhyu! For 1000 years, take over the old age that destroys beauty and complexion. Give me your youth. When 1000 years have passed, I will return your youth to you and take back the guilt and the consequent old age." Druhyu replied, "One who is old cannot enjoy elephants, chariots, horses or women. Speech fails him. Therefore, I do not desire this old age." Yayati said, "You were born from my heart, but will not give your youth to me. O Druhyu! Therefore, the most cherished of your desires will not come true. You and your lineage will not be kings, but will have the title of 'Bhoja'[157] in a land where the only means of transportation will be rafts, boats and swimming. O Anu! Accept my guilt and the consequent old age. I will have your youth for 1000 years." Anu replied, "Those who are old eat like children, drooling and unclean at all times of the day. They cannot pour offerings into the sacrificial fire at the right time. I do not wish for such an old age." Yayati said, "You were born from my heart, but will not give your youth to me. Since you have described so many faults associated with old age, old age will overcome you. Your offspring will be destroyed as soon as they attain youth. You yourself will not be able to perform any sacrifices before the fire."

'Yayati said, "O Puru! You are my youngest and most beloved son. You will be the best among them. O son! Old age, wrinkles and grey hair have overcome me, because of a curse imposed by Kavya Ushanas. But I am not yet satiated with youth. O Puru! Accept my guilt and the consequent old age. I will enjoy pleasures for some time with your youth. After 1000 years have passed, I will return your youth to you and accept back the guilt and the consequent old age." Having been thus addressed by his father, Puru replied, "O great king! I will do what you command me to do. O king! I will take

upon myself the guilt and the consequent old age. Accept my youth and enjoy pleasures as you wish. I will live as you say, attacked by old age and deprived of youth and beauty. I will give you my youth." Yayati said, "O Puru! O son! I am extremely pleased with you. Since I am pleased, I will grant you this. Your offspring will rule the kingdom, be prosperous and accomplish all their desires."'

## 80

Vaishampayana said, 'Having received Puru's youth, Yayati, Nahusha's son and the best of kings, was delighted and indulged in pleasures—as he desired, as he could sustain, at whichever time he wished, and as it gave him happiness. O lord of kings! But he did nothing that was against dharma. He pleased the gods with sacrifices, the ancestors with shraddha ceremonies, the poor through charity, the Brahmanas by fulfilling their desires, the guests through food and drink, the Vaishyas with protection, the Shudras with kindness and the dasyus with suppression. Yayati pleased all his subjects by ruling according to dharma, like Indra himself. The king was as valorous as a lion. He was young and enjoyed all the pleasures and unlimited happiness, but without transgressing dharma. The king was extremely happy at these grand pleasures. However, the ruler of men was also despondent when he remembered that 1000 years would soon end. Knowing the measurement of time, the valorous one counted kalas and kashthas.

'When the entire duration was complete, he called his son Puru and said, "O son! O vanquisher of foes! With your youth, I have enjoyed pleasures—as I desired, as I could sustain and at whichever time I wished. O Puru! O fortunate one! I am extremely pleased with you. Take back your youth now. Also take the kingdom, because you are the son who has brought pleasure to me." Nahusha's son, King Yayati, then took back his old age and his son Puru received back his youth.

'The king wished to instate his youngest son, Puru, as the king. But the four varnas, led by the Brahmanas, said, "O lord! How can you instate Puru in the kingdom, overlooking your eldest son Yadu, who is Sharmishtha's son and Shukra's grandson? Yadu is your eldest son. Turvasu comes after him. After him, there is Sharmishtha's son Druhyu and then Anu and then Puru. How is it proper to pass over the elders and instate the youngest as the king? In accordance with dharma, which you uphold, we wish to bring this to your attention." Yayati replied, "Listen to my words, everyone from the four varnas, led by the Brahmanas, as to why the kingdom cannot be given to my eldest son. My commands were disobeyed by my eldest son Yadu. It is the opinion of the learned that a son who acts counter to the father's wishes is no son at all. He is a son who follows the words of his mother and father for their welfare. He is a son who acts like a son with his father and mother. Yadu has slighted me and so has Turvasu. I have been extremely slighted by Druhyu and Anu. Puru is the only one who has specially followed my commands and respected me. Though he is the youngest, he accepted my

old age. Puru is like my true son; he did what I desired. Kavya Ushanas Shukra himself granted me the boon that a son who followed my instructions would become the king and would rule over the earth. Therefore, I ask all of you to allow Puru to be instated as the king." The people said, "It is true that a son who has all the qualities and always seeks the welfare of his mother and father and respects them deserves to be the lord, even if he is the youngest. Since Shukra has granted this boon, there is nothing that we can say." At these words from the citizens of the town and the country, Nahusha's son then instated his son Puru as the king.

'Giving the kingdom to Puru, he accepted the vows for departing to the forest and left his capital with the Brahmanas and the ascetics. Yadu's sons are known as the Yadavas, Turvasu's sons are known as the Yavanas, Druhyu's sons are known as the Bhojas and Anu's sons as the mlecchas. Puru's sons are known as the Pourava lineage. O king! You yourself have been born to rule this kingdom for 1000 years.'

81

Vaishampayana said, 'Having instated his beloved son as the king, Nahusha's son King Yayati was happy and became a sage in the forest. He lived in the forest with Brahmanas, rigid in his vows and living on roots and fruit. After a life of self-control, he ascended to heaven. Having attained heaven, he lived there in bliss and happiness. But after a long time, he was again thrown out by Shakra. I have heard that when he was hurled down from heaven, he remained suspended in the sky and did not reach the surface of the earth. It has been said that he later again went to heaven, together with the kings Vasumana, Ashtaka, the valorous Pratardana and Shibi.'

Janamejaya asked, 'Through what deeds did the lord of the earth again attain heaven? O Brahmana! Before all these Brahmanas who are rishis, I wish to hear all the details. Yayati was like the king of the gods and lord of the earth. He extended the Puru lineage. He was as resplendent as the sun. The great-souled one's fame was extensive and his deeds based on truth. I wish to hear his complete story, in heaven and here.'

Vaishampayana said, 'I will recount for you the excellent account of Yayati's exploits, in heaven and here. This is sacred and destroys sins for all those who hear it. Having instated his youngest son Puru on the throne, Nahusha's son, King Yayati, happily retired to the forest. He cast aside to the farthest corners his other sons, with Yadu at their head. The king lived in the forest for a long time, surviving on roots and fruit. He paid homage to the gods and the ancestors, conquered his rage and controlled his senses. He poured offerings into the fire, as prescribed for those who retire to the forest. The lord worshipped his guests by offering forest food and ghee. He sustained himself through gleanings of corn and remnants of food from others. In this way, the king passed a full thousand years. For thirty autumns he lived on water alone, controlling his mind and speech. For one year he lived on air, without sleeping. For another year, he

performed austerities amid the five sacred fires.[158] For six months, he stood immobile on one leg. The performer of sacred deeds then ascended heaven.'

82

Vaishampayana said, 'When that lord of kings lived in heaven among the gods, the thirty gods, the saddhyas, the maruts and the vasus paid him homage. The performer of sacred deeds often went from the world of the gods to Brahma's world. It has been said that the lord of the earth lived there for a very long time.

'One day, Yayati, supreme among kings, went to Shakra and in the course of the conversation Shakra asked the lord of the earth, "O king! What did you tell Puru when he accepted your old age and roamed the earth and when you gave him the kingdom? Tell me truly." Yayati replied, "I told him that he would be the king of the earth in the central region, between the rivers Ganga and Yamuna. His brothers would rule over the other regions. I told him that men who possess no anger are superior to those who have anger, men with forgiveness are superior to those who do not forgive, that men are superior to animals and the learned to the ignorant. If abused, one should not abuse back in turn. If not suppressed, anger burns one's good deeds. One should not cause pain to others through cruel words. One should not cause fear to those who are worse off. One should not utter words that hurt and cause pain to others, taking one to hell. One who wounds another through the thorn of harsh, sharp and abrasive speech is deserted by Lakshmi and bears evil in his mouth. A righteous man should always be worshipped in the front. A righteous man should protect one's back. One should always disregard the cruel words of wicked ones. Cruel words issue from the mouth like arrows and cause hurt, night and day. When they descend, they strike the innermost parts and learned ones never release them on others. In the three worlds, there is nothing that pacifies as much as compassion, friendship towards beings, charity and sweet words. Therefore, one should always use words that pacify and never those that are harsh. One should honour those deserving of respect, always give, and never ask.'

83

'Indra said, "O king! O son of Nahusha! O Yayati! After accomplishing all your deeds, you left your home and departed for the forest. Tell me, who are you equal to in your austerities? I am asking you."

'Yayati replied, "O Vasava![159] I do not see anyone equal to me in austerities among gods, men, gandharvas and maharshis."

'Indra said, "O king! Since you are disrespecting those who are your superiors, equals and inferiors, without knowing their powers, these worlds will end for you now. Your merits will diminish and you will fall."

'Yayati replied, "O Shakra! O king of the gods! Since my disrespect for gods, rishis,

gandharvas and men have diminished me and made me lose these worlds, I wish that when I am deprived of the world of the gods, I should fall among righteous men."

'Indra said, "O king! You will fall among those who are righteous. There you will again obtain great standing. O Yayati! After knowing this, you will never again show disrespect for your superiors and your equals."'

Vaishampayana said, 'At that, Yayati fell from the sacred worlds, frequented by the king of the gods. While he was falling, rajarshi Ashtaka, the protector of true dharma, saw him. Ashtaka asked, "O youth! Who are you? You are like Vasava in your form and blaze like the fire with your own radiance. Why are you falling like the sun, the chief among those in the sky and the dispeller of masses of dark clouds? On seeing you fall from the sun's path, as immeasurably radiant as the sun or the fire, everyone is wondering at what is falling among us and is being deprived of consciousness. On seeing you traverse the path of the gods, equal in radiance to Surya, Indra and Vishnu, we have all arisen and come together, to ask you the reason for your downfall. O one whose beauty causes envy! Had you asked us first who we were, we would not have committed the impudence of asking you first. But we now ask you, who are you and why have you come here? O one with Indra's powers! Let your fear be dispelled. Let your misery and delusion end. You are now in the presence of those who are righteous. Even Shakra, the killer of Bala, will not dare to harm you here. O one who is equal to the king of the gods! Righteous ones always provide standing to those who have been deprived of their happiness. Righteous ones are lords of the movable and the immovable. Righteous ones are assembled here and you are among them, those who are like you. Fire is the lord of burning. Earth is the lord of sowing. The sun is the lord of light. Like that, a guest is the lord of the righteous."'

## 84

'Yayati said, "I am Yayati, Nahusha's son and Puru's father. Disrespect for all beings has dislodged me from the world of the gods, the siddhas and the rishis. My merit diminished, I am falling. Since I am older than you in age, I was not the first to greet you. He who is senior in learning, austerities or birth is older and is worshipped by the Brahmanas."

'Ashtaka replied, "O king! You say that he who is older in age deserves the respect of others and that is the reason you did not greet first. But it is also said that the worship of Brahmanas is for him who is senior in learning and austerities."

'Yayati said, "It is said that evil deeds destroy the merit of good deeds and vanity leads to the evil worlds. The righteous never follow evil and act so as to increase their virtue. I myself had great riches.[160] But all that is gone now and I will not get it back, despite my best efforts. One who learns from this fate will be wise and righteous. In the world of the living, men have different dispositions, but depending on destiny, their

power and efforts may amount to nothing. Knowing that destiny is supreme, the learned say that the wise are content with what they obtain. Happiness and misery are determined by destiny and are beyond one's control and powers. Knowing that destiny is supreme, one should not be miserable or happy. The wise are always equable, without misery in grief and exultation in happiness. Knowing that destiny is supreme, grief and exultation are pointless. O Ashtaka! I never tremble in fear. Nor is my mind ever affected by anxiety. For I know that it will certainly be the way the creator has determined for me. Insects,[161] those born from eggs, vegetables, reptiles, worms, fish, stones, wood and everything, when freed from action, are reunited with nature. I know that happiness and unhappiness are not eternal. O Ashtaka! Knowing this, why should I grieve? We never know what should be done to avoid misery. Therefore, I am not concerned and give up grief."

'Ashtaka replied, "O lord of kings! Tell me in detail the accurate accounts of the worlds that you enjoyed and where you spent time. You speak of dharma like one who knows the subject."

'Yayati said, "I was a king, ruling over the entire earth as my kingdom. I acquired many great worlds and those beyond them. I lived there for 1000 years and then ascended to a superior world. That beautiful world was the capital of Puruhuta.[162] It had 1000 gates and extended for 1000 yojanas. I lived there for 1000 years and then ascended to a superior world. I attained that world, which was divine and without decay. It was the world of Prajapati, one that is difficult to attain. I lived there for 1000 years and then ascended to a superior world. That was the abode of the god of the gods.[163] I lived in that world, as I wished. The thirty gods have paid me homage. I have rivalled the gods in power and glory. In Nandana, I could assume any form at will. For a million years I sported with apsaras, in mountains with flowering trees and fragrant scents. I lived there in divine happiness for a large number of years, beyond counting. Then a messenger of the gods, terrible in visage, shouted to me thrice in a deep voice, 'Ruined, ruined, ruined'. O king![164] I remember that I fell from Nandana with my merits diminished. O lord of men! I heard the voices of the gods in the sky, lamenting and mourning. 'Yayati of sacred fame and sacred deeds has had his merit diminished and is falling. What misfortune!' When I was falling, I asked them, 'Where are the righteous ones among whom I shall fall?' They pointed me to this sacrificial ground that belongs to you. On seeing it, I came here quickly. I smelt the fragrance of ghee wafting up from the sacrificial ground. I saw the smoke rising up and was reassured."'

## 85

'Ashtaka asked, "O one who is foremost among those of Krita Yuga![165] You could assume any form at will. You spent a million years in the garden of Nandana. Why did

you have to give it up and come to earth?”

‘Yayati replied, “Here, friends and relatives forsake a man who has lost his wealth. There, the gods and their lord forsake one whose merit has been diminished.”

‘Ashtaka said, “I am curious to know how one’s merit is diminished there. My mind is confused on this. Please also tell me which worlds are attained through which means. Please tell me. I know that you know the subject.”

‘Yayati replied, “O god among men! With great lamentations, those who speak of their own merits are hurled down to the hell known as bhouma. Though actually lean, they grow and become food for vultures, dogs and jackals. Therefore, in this world, a man should avoid evil acts that are condemned. O king! I have now told you everything. Please tell me, what else should I say.”

‘Ashtaka said, “When life is destroyed through age and they are torn apart by vultures, peacocks[166] and insects, where do they live and how do they come to life again? I have not heard of a hell named bhouma.”

‘Yayati replied, “When they have ascended from their bodies, depending on their deeds, they are born again on earth. They descend into the hell known as bhouma, and it is impossible to count the many number of years spent there. Some fall in the sky for 60,000 years. Some others fall for 80,000 years. They then fall to bhouma and are attacked by terrible rakshasas with sharp teeth.”

‘Ashtaka said, “When they fall thus to bhouma, why are they attacked by terrible rakshasas with sharp teeth? How do they continue to exist? How do the dead enter the womb again?”

‘Yayati replied, “Just as raindrops cling to flowers and fruit, they cling to the semen created by man. They then enter a woman at the time of her season and become an embryo in the womb. In visible form, life enters trees, herbs, water, air, the earth and the sky. Thus do the dead become embryos again, in the form of bipeds and quadrupeds.”

‘Ashtaka said, “Does a seed enter the womb with the old form? Or does it get a new form? How is a human womb entered? Tell me, because I still have doubts. How is the visible form of limbs, eyes, ears and senses acquired? Since I am asking you, tell me all this. O father! You know everything on the subject.”

‘Yayati replied, “When it is the season, the invisible form enters the womb through the sperm, like into a flower with its juices. Depending on the rights that have been acquired,[167] the embryo develops with the passage of time. When the limbs are developed and the six[168] senses established, man is formed. With his ears, he gets to know sound. With his eyes, he gets to see form. With his nose, he knows smell and with his tongue, taste. With touch, he gets to feel and with his mind, he gets to know feelings. O Ashtaka! Know that this is how the great atman develops life in the body.”

‘Ashtaka said, “A man who is dead is burnt, buried in the ground or becomes dust. He

is reduced to nothing after death. Later, how does he get to know himself again?”

‘Yayati replied, “O lion among kings! A man who dies is like one asleep. However, his good and evil acts are in front of him. When the body is dead, he assumes some other form with a speed that is swifter than that of the wind. Those who have performed good deeds go to a pure birth. Those who did evil go to an evil birth. O one with great feelings! The evil become worms and insects. I will not speak about them. I have told you how the dead become embryos again—bipeds, quadrupeds and those with six legs. I have told you everything in detail. What more do you wish to ask?”

‘Ashtaka said, “O father! Is there anything that can be done to attain the superior worlds, through austerities and the pursuit of learning, instead of returning to earth? How does one attain the world of supreme bliss? I am asking you. Please tell me everything accurately.”

‘Yayati replied, “Austerities, gifts, tranquillity, self-control, humility and compassion towards all beings. The learned say a man is deluded and loses everything through pride. A man of knowledge, who thinks himself to be learned and uses his learning to debase the fame of others, never attains the eternal worlds. Nor does the brahman yield any fruits to him. There are four acts that dispel all fear of danger, but cause fear if performed in the wrong way, with pride—offerings before the fire, vow of silence, studying and sacrifices. The learned should find no pride in homage. The learned should not grieve if insulted. The good always honour the good in this world. The evil never possess the intelligence of the good. I have paid homage, I have performed sacrifices, I have studied and I have observed vows. But I have done all this while discarding fear. The learned ones know the ancient one who is the refuge and is worshipped from the mind. He is the one with a supreme and radiant form, for finding supreme peace here and in the world hereafter.”’

## 86

‘Ashtaka asked, “How should a householder act so as to attain the gods? What about mendicants and those who practise brahmacharya? What about the one who is devoted to the right path after retiring to the forest? Those who know have many differing views on this.”

‘Yayati replied, “A successful brahmachari should not be asked to do his preceptor’s work and will study when asked to do so. He will awake first and go to bed after everyone else. He will be soft in speech, not stirred by pride, devoted to studying and self-controlled. The ancient sacred texts say that when a householder obtains riches according to dharma, he must spend it on sacrifices and give alms and provide food to guests. He should not take from others what has not been given him. A chief sage who has attained success must live on his own strength in the forest. He must give to others and never cause them pain. He must be controlled in his food and deeds. The true

mendicant is one who does not depend on any craft for his living. He is always without a home, has control over his senses and is always free from attachment. He does not live under a roof and travels with little and light belongings. He roams through many regions alone. When there is a night in this world when one has conquered desire and happiness, that is the night when a learned one should become an ascetic. A person who performs good deeds in the forest frees ten generations that have come before and ten that come after him—counting himself, that is twenty-one generations."

'Ashtaka asked, "How many kinds of sages are there and how many who observe vows of silence? Tell us. We wish to hear all this from you."

'Yayati replied, "He is a true sage who lives in the forest and turns his back on the village. He is also one who lives in the village and turns his back on the forest."

'Ashtaka asked, "How can one turn one's back on the village while living in the forest, or turn one's back on the forest while living in the village?"

'Yayati replied, "The sage who lives in the forest uses nothing from the village. Thus he turns his back on the village while living in the forest. But a true sage who maintains no fire and has no house or clan and keeps roaming, who wants nothing more than a loincloth as a garment and who is content with food that is enough to sustain life, he lives in the village and turns his back to the forest. He has given up all desire and deeds[169] and has his senses under complete control. He is the one who attains success in this world as a sage. Who will not worship one whose teeth are washed, nails are clipped, who is always bathed and without dirt and whose deeds are white, though he may be dark in complexion?[170] Lean from austerities and emaciated in blood, flesh and bones, such a sage not only conquers this world, but also the supreme one. The sage who observes a vow of silence and sits in meditation, with indifference between opposites,[171] he conquers this world and the supreme world. A sage who eats like cattle and other animals,[172] all his earlier worlds merge with the eternal at the time of universal destruction."'

## 87

'Ashtaka asked, "O king! Who among these two,[173] though both exert like the sun and the moon, first attains union with the gods?"

'Yayati replied, "He who has no home despite being a householder and has controlled his desires, and the mendicant who lives in the village but has no home, will reach first. Both those who don't attain old age and those who do can deteriorate. Because even if austerities are performed, there will be more austerities. It is said that cruelty finds no truth. O king! Even if one has no riches, but devotedly observes dharma without thinking of gains, one attains union with the eternal."

'Ashtaka said, "O king! You are young, handsome, garlanded and resplendent. Where

have you come from and where are you going? Whose messenger are you? O lord of the earth! Where is your place?”

‘Yayati replied, “Since I have lost my merits, I am falling into the hell known as bhouma. I have been cast out from the sky and am entering the earth. I will go there after telling you that I must fall more. The Brahmanas and the rulers of the worlds are asking me to hasten. O lord of men! I obtained a boon from Shakra that I would fall among righteous men when I fell on the surface of the earth, at a place where the ones with all the good qualities were assembled.”

‘Ashtaka said, “O king! Do not keep falling. I ask you if there is any world for me here, in the sky or in heaven. I think you know the subject of dharma.”

‘Yayati replied, “O lion among kings! There are many worlds for you to enjoy in heaven, as many as the cattle and horses on earth and animals in the forests and in the mountains. This you must know.”

‘Ashtaka said, “O lord of kings! I give you all the worlds that are mine in heaven, be they in the sky or in heaven. O one who beats back enemies! Take them and go there quickly. Do not keep falling.”

‘Yayati replied, “O chief among kings! The likes of me, who are not Brahmanas or those who know the brahman, do not accept gifts. O lord of men! Earlier, I have always given to Brahmanas myself, as one must. Let no one who is not a Brahmana earn a living through begging, nor should the Brahmana wife of a valorous husband. If I act the way I have never done before, what righteousness will come of that?”

‘Pratardana[174] said, “O one with beauty that leads to envy! My name is Pratardana. I ask if there are any worlds for me, in heaven or in the sky, for I think that you know the subject of dharma.”

‘Yayati replied, “O lord of men! There are many worlds for you, dripping with nectar mixed with ghee and full of bliss. Even if you live in each for seven days, they will last you eternally.”

‘Pratardana said, “I give them all to you. Do not keep falling. Whatever worlds are for me, in the sky or in heaven, take them quickly and go there, shedding all your delusions.”

‘Yayati replied, “O king! No king who is equal in energy will crave for and accept the possessions obtained by another king through yoga. Even if affected with the adversity of destiny, no wise king should act in a cruel way. An intelligent king will tread the path of dharma and fame and bear dharma in mind. A person like me, learned and knowledgeable about dharma, will not act in the mean way you have advised. If I do[175] what others refuse to accept, how can that bring my welfare?” When King Yayati spoke these words, Vasumana, supreme among kings, addressed him.’

‘Vasumana said, “O lord of men! I am Vasumana, the son of Roushadashvi, who is asking you. Is there any world for me in heaven? O great-souled one! I think you know the subject of dharma.”

‘Yayati replied, “In the sky, on earth and in the directions and wherever the sun radiates its heat, eternal worlds are waiting for you in heaven.”

‘Vasumana said, “I give them all to you. Do not keep falling. Let all my worlds be yours. O king! O wise one! If it is improper for you to accept them as a gift, buy them with a piece of straw.”

‘Yayati replied, “From childhood, I have not taken anything in a wrong way. I do not remember any false sale. If I do what others refuse to accept, how can that bring my welfare?”

‘Vasumana said, “O king! If it is improper to purchase them, take these worlds from me as a gift. O lord of men! I will certainly never go there. Therefore, let these worlds be yours.”

‘Shibi said, “O father! I am Shibi, the son of Ushinara. I ask you if there are any worlds, in the sky or in heaven, that are for me. I think you know the subject of dharma.”

‘Yayati replied, “O lord of men! In speech and in your heart, you have never refused anyone who asked you. Therefore, eternal worlds await you in heaven, great, prosperous and radiant as lightning.”

‘Shibi said, “O king! Accept these worlds as yours. If you don’t wish to accept them as a gift, purchase them. I will not accept them, now that I have given them to you. Go to those worlds.”

‘Yayati replied, “O Shibi! You are indeed the equal of Indra in influence. O lord of men! Your worlds are infinite. But I derive no pleasure from worlds that are given to me. Therefore, I cannot accept what you have given to me.”

‘Ashtaka said, “O king! You have not welcomed any of our worlds. But we have given them all to you. You will now go to hell.”

‘Yayati replied, “You have given to one who is deserving of gifts. All of you are strict in your righteousness and devoted to the truth. But I do not have the courage to do what I have not done earlier.”

‘Ashtaka said, “We see these five golden chariots before us. Who do they belong to? They are high and shining, blazing like the flames of fire.”

‘Yayati replied, “These five golden chariots, high and shining and blazing like the flames of fire, will bear you.”

‘Ashtaka said, “O king! Climb into your chariot and ride valorously in the sky. We will follow you when our time comes.”

‘Yayati replied, “All of us must go together. All of us have conquered heaven. Look, our path to the world of the gods has become visible.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Lighting up the sky and earth with the glory of their righteousness, those supreme kings then ascended their chariots and departed for heaven.

‘Ashtaka said, “I thought that I would be the first one to leave. The great-souled Indra has always been my friend. How is it that the vehicle of Shibi, son of Ushinara, has speedily outpaced us?”

‘Yayati replied, “Shibi, Ushinara’s son, has given up all his riches for the path of the gods. Therefore, he is the best among us. Gifts, austerities, truthfulness, dharma, humility, riches, forgiveness, equanimity and forbearance—King Shibi has always had them all, in incomparable measure. He is a learned king who has never been cruel. He is also restrained by his modesty. It is for these reasons that his chariot now outpaces ours.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Driven by curiosity, Ashtaka again asked his maternal grandfather, who was equal to Indra, “O king! I am asking you. Please tell me truthfully. Where have you come from? Who do you belong to? Whose son are you? In this world, what is it that you have performed that no one else, Brahmana or Kshatriya, can perform?” Yayati replied, “I am Yayati, the son of Nahusha and Puru’s father. I was a universal emperor on earth. You are my relatives. So I am revealing the secret to you. I am your maternal grandfather. Having conquered the entire earth, I gave it to Brahmanas. I gave them also handsome horses with single hooves and the gods then obtained their rightful shares. I gave this entire earth away to Brahmanas, with all its means of transport—cattle, gold, the best of riches and cows that numbered one hundred *arbudas*.[176] The sky and the earth still exist because of my righteousness and the fire burns among mankind. Never have I uttered a word that is not true. The learned always worship the truth. In all the worlds, I know that gods and sages are revered because they are devoted to the truth. He who recounts the tale of our ascent to heaven to the chief among Brahmanas, who do not question it, will himself attain the same worlds as us.” Thus, the great-souled king, who was the scourage of his enemies, was saved by his grandsons. The performer of the most noble of deeds left the earth and went to heaven, filling the earth with his exploits.’

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Janamejaya said, ‘O illustrious one! I wish to hear about the kings who established dynasties in the lineage of Puru. Tell me who they were, about their valour, their power and their courage. I have heard that in this lineage there wasn’t a single king who lacked in valour or in good conduct. Nor was there one who lacked in offspring. O one blessed with the power of austerities! I wish to hear detailed accounts of these kings who were learned and famous, and about their character.’

Vaishampayana said, ‘I will tell you what you have asked. The valorous ones of Puru’s

lineage were like Shakra in their energy. Through his wife Poushti, Puru had three maharathas as his sons—Pravira, Ishvara and Roudrashva. Pravira was the one who extended the lineage. Through Shuraseni, Pravira had the valorous Manasyu as his son. This one, with eyes like blue lotuses, became the lord of the earth, right up to the extremities of the four directions. Through Souviri, Manasyu had three sons—Subhru, Samhanana and Vagmi. They were all brave maharathas. Through an apsara, Roudrashva had ten great archers as his sons. They were brave warriors, performed many sacrifices and were famous and had many offspring. They were all learned in the science of weapons and were all devoted to dharma. They were Richepu, Kakshepu, the valorous Krikanepu, Sthandilyepu, Vanepu, the great warrior Sthalepu, the mighty Tejepu, the wise Satyepu, whose valour was like Indra's, Dharmepu and the tenth was Samtanepu, whose might was like that of a god. O son! These sons were born through Anadhrishti.[177] They performed royal sacrifices and horse sacrifices. O king! Richepu had a wise son named King Matinara. Matinara himself had four sons whose valour was unbounded—Tamsu, Mahana, Atiratha and Druhyu, whose radiance was unequalled. Among them, it was the greatly valorous Tamsu who extended the Puru lineage. He conquered the entire earth and obtained great fame and splendour. Tamsu gave birth to a valorous son named Ilina, who was supreme among conquerors and subjugated the entire earth. O king! Through Rathantari, Ilina gave birth to five sons who were like the five elements[178]—Duhshanta, Shura, Bhima, Pravasu and Vasu.

'O Janamejaya! The eldest Duhshanta became the king. From him, and through Shakuntala, was born a learned son named Bharata who became the king. It was through him that the greatly famous Bharata dynasty started. Through his three wives, Bharata had nine sons. But none of them was like him and the king was not satisfied with any of them. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Bharata then performed a great sacrifice and obtained a son named Bhumanyu through Bharadvaja. O best of the Bharata lineage! Puru's descendant looked upon this son as his own.[179] Bhumanyu was instated as the heir apparent. The king himself had a son named Vitatha and Vitatha became known as Bhumanyu's son. Through Pushkarini, Bhumanyu had sons named Suhotra, Suhota, Suhavi, Sujayu and Richika. Suhotra, the eldest among them, became the king of the earth. He performed many royal and horse sacrifices. Suhotra conquered the entire earth, right up to the boundaries of the ocean, with all its elephants, cattle, horses and many gems. The earth seemed to be oppressed at the many burdens he placed on her, with masses of elephants, horses, chariots and human beings. Suhotra was a king who ruled over his subjects in accordance with dharma. The earth was covered with hundreds and thousands of altars and sacrificial stakes. People and crops were plentiful and the earth was adorned with the presence of the gods. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Suhotra, the lord of the earth, gave birth to three sons through Aikshvaki—Ajamidha, Sumidha and Purumidha. Ajamidha was the chief among them

and he perpetuated the dynasty. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Through his three wives, he had six sons. Riksha was born from Dhumini, Duhshanta and Parameshthi were born from Nili, and Jahnu, Jana and Rupina were born from Keshini. All the Panchalas were descended from Duhshanta and Parameshthi. The Kushikas were descended from the infinitely energetic Jahnu. It is said that Riksha was older than Jana and Rupina and became the king.

'O king! Riksha had a son named Samvarana and he extended your lineage. It has been heard that when Riksha's son Samvarana ruled the earth as king, there was a great disaster that led to the destruction of subjects. The kingdom was broken up through famine, plague, drought and disease. The armies of their enemies defeated the Bharatas and sought to conquer the earth with fourfold armies.[180] The Panchalas soon conquered the entire earth and defeated them in battle with ten akshouhinis of soldiers. In great fear, King Samvarana fled with his wife, sons, advisers and friends. He then found shelter in the forests on the banks of the river Sindhu,[181] where the river extends up to the mountains. Facing a difficult situation, the Bharatas lived there for many years. They lived there for 1000 years.

'One day, the illustrious rishi Vashishtha went there to the Bharatas and at his approach, they respectfully and dutifully paid him homage. All the Bharatas then offered the radiant rishi welcoming gifts and honoured him. He lived there for eight years and the king himself then requested him to be their priest, so that they might regain their kingdom. Vashishtha agreed to this by saying "Om" to the Bharatas. We have heard that he instated the Pourava[182] as the emperor of all the Kshatriyas, like the tusk[183] of the entire expansive earth. The descendant of Bharata was established in his former supreme capital. With his great strength, he conquered the earth once more. Samvarana, the descendant of Ajamidha, performed many great sacrifices in which a lot of alms were given. Through Tapati, the daughter of Surya, Samvarana had a son named Kuru. Since Kuru was learned in the way of dharma, all the subjects instated him as their king. It is after his name that Kurujangala[184] has become so famous in the world. The great ascetic made Kurukshetra a sacred place through his austerities there. We have heard that Ashvavana, Abhishyanta, Chitraratha, Muni and the famous Janamejaya[185] were his five sons, through the intelligent Vahini. Abhishyanta begot Parikshit,[186] the powerful Shabalashva, Abhiraja, Viraja, the immensely strong Shalmali, Uchchaishrava,[187] Bhadrakara and Jitari as the eighth. Seven more immensely strong sons were born in this lineage—Janamejaya and the others. They were learned and famous for the qualities of their deeds. Parikshit had sons who were learned in dharma and artha—Kakshasena, Ugrasena, the immensely valorous Chitrasena, Indrasena, Sushena and Bhimasena. Janamejaya's sons were famous on earth because they were very strong—Dhritarashtra who was born first, Pandu, Bahlika,

the immensely energetic Nishada, the powerful Jambunada, Kundodara, Padati and Vasati as the eighth. All of them were skilled in dharma and artha and were always engaged in the welfare of all beings. Dhritarashtra became the king and his sons were Kundika, Hasti, Vitarka, Kratha, Kundala as the fifth, Havishrava, Indrabha and the invincible Sumanyu. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Pratipa had three sons—Devapi, Shantanu and the maharatha Bahlika. Urged by a desire for dharma and welfare, Devapi became a hermit. Shantanu and the maharatha Bahlika obtained the earth. Many other maharathas and supreme and righteous kings were born in the Bharata lineage, equal to gods and rishis. In this way, many maharathas were born in Manu's lineage. They were the equals of the gods themselves. Their numbers extended Ila's lineage.'

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Janamejaya said, 'O Brahmana! I have now heard from you the great origins of my ancestors. I have also heard about the noble kings who were born in my lineage. But I am still not satisfied with this account that I love, because it is too brief. Therefore, narrate it to me in greater detail—the divine account from Prajapati Manu onwards. Who will not find pleasure in hearing of such a sacred lineage? There is abundant and established fame in the three worlds about the qualities, righteousness, greatness, strength, influence, valour, energy and perseverance of these men. I am not satisfied with what I have heard of this history, which is like the taste of amrita.'

Vaishampayana said, 'O king! Then listen to the complete and pure history of your lineage as I recite it, exactly as I had heard it from Dvaipayana. From Daksha, Aditi. From Aditi, Vivasvat. From Vivasvat, Manu. From Manu, Ila. From Ila, Pururava. From Pururava, Ayus. From Ayus, Nahusha. From Nahusha, Yayati. Yayati had two wives—Vrishaparva's daughter was Sharmishtha and Ushanasha's daughter was Devayani. There is the account that Devayani gave birth to Yadu and Turvasu and Sharmishtha, Vrishaparva's daughter, gave birth to Druhyu, Anu and Puru. From Yadu, the Yadavas. From Puru, the Pouravas. Puru's wife was Koushalya. Through her, he had a son named Janamejaya. He performed three horse sacrifices and after performing the sacrifice known as *vishvajita*,[188] retired to the forest. Yayati married Ananta, the daughter of Madhava. From this was born Prachinvata. He conquered the regions of the east, right up to where the sun rises and thus his name.[189] Prachinvata married Ashmaki and she gave birth to Samyati. Samyati married Drishadvat's daughter Varangi and she gave birth to Ahampati. Ahampati married Kritavirya's daughter Bhanumati and she gave birth to Sarvabhouma. Sarvabhouma conquered and carried off Sunanda, daughter of Kekaya, and she gave birth to Jayatsena. Jayatsena married Sushrava from the Vidarbha region and she gave birth to Arachina. Arachina married Maryada, also from the Vidarbha region, and she gave birth to Mahabhouma. Mahabhouma married

Prasenjit's daughter Suyajna and she gave birth to Ayutanayi. He was so named because he performed a sacrifice where one ayuta[190] of human sacrifices were made. Ayutanayi married Prithushrava's daughter Bhasa and she gave birth to Akrodhana. Akrodhana married Karandu from the Kalinga region and she gave birth to Devatithi. Devatithi married Maryada from the Videha region and she gave birth to Richa. Richa married Sudeva from the Anga region and she gave birth to Riksha. Riksha married Takshaka's daughter Jvala and through her had a son named Matinara. Matinara performed a sacrifice on the banks of the Sarasvati for twelve years. When the sacrifice was over, Sarasvati herself came to him and chose him as her husband. Through her, he had a son named Tamsu. On this, there is a saying that Sarasvati gave birth to a son named Tamsu from Matinara and through Kalindi, Tamsu gave birth to a son named Ilina.

'Ilina had five sons through Rathantari; Duhshanta was the eldest. Duhshanta married Visvamitra's daughter Shakuntala and she gave birth to Bharata. On this, there are two shlokas.

The mother is only a leather bag.[191] The son who is born from the father is the father himself. O Duhshanta! Maintain your son and do not forsake Shakuntala.

O king of men! A son who has sperm rescues one from Yama's abode.[192] You are the father who has planted this embryo. Shakuntala has spoken the truth.

Hence his name was Bharata. Bharata married Sarvasena's daughter Sunanda, from the Kashi region. She gave birth to Bhumanyu. Bhumanyu married Dasarha's daughter Vijaya and she gave birth to Suhotra. Suhotra married Suvarna of the Ikshvaku lineage and she gave birth to Hasti. He established this city of Hastinapura, which is why it was named Hastinapura. Hasti married Yashodhara from the Trigarta region and she gave birth to Vikunthana. Vikunthana married Sudeva from the Dasarha region and she gave birth to Ajamidha. Ajamidha had 2400 sons through Kaikeyi, Nagi, Gandhari, Vimala and Riksha. Each became a king and established a dynasty. Among them, Samvarana was the one who carried the lineage forward. Samvarana married Tapati, Vivasvat's daughter, and she gave birth to Kuru. Kuru married Subhagi from the Dasarha region and she gave birth to Viduratha. Viduratha married Sanpriya, daughter of Madhava and she gave birth to Arugvata. Arugvata married Amrita from the Magadha region and she gave birth to Parikshit. Parikshit married Bahuda's daughter Suyasa and she gave birth to Bhimasena. Bhimasena married Sukumari of the Kekaya region and she gave birth to Paryashrava, also known as Pratipa. Pratipa married Shibi's daughter Sunanda and through her had sons named Devapi, Shantanu and Bahlika.

'Devapi retired to the forest when he was still a child. Shantanu then became the king. There is a saying about this. "Those who were touched with his hands felt extreme pleasure and became young again. Therefore, he was known as Shantanu."[193] Thus, he

was known as Shantanu. Shantanu married Bhagirathi Ganga and she gave birth to Devavrata, who later came to be known as Bhishma. To do that which would bring pleasure to his father, Devavrata got him married to Satyavati. She became his mother and she was also known as Gandhakali. Before that, while she was still a virgin, she had a son named Dvaipayana through Parashara. She bore two more sons to Shantanu, Vichitravirya and Chitrangada. But before reaching manhood, Chitrangada was killed by a gandharva and Vichitravirya then became the king. Vichitravirya married two daughers born to the king of Kashi through his wife Kousalya—Ambika and Ambalika. However, Vichitravirya died childless. Then Satyavati began to worry that Duhshanta's lineage would become extinct. She thought of the rishi Dvaipayana and he appeared before her and asked, "What is your command?" She told him, "Your brother Vichitravirya has gone to heaven childless. For his sake, be the father of righteous children." Dvaipayana agreed and was the father to three sons—Dhritarashtra, Pandu and Vidura. Of these, because of a boon granted by Dvaipayana, Dhritarashtra had 100 sons through his wife Gandhari. Four of Dhritarashtra's sons were chief—Duryodhana, Duhshasana, Vikarna and Chitrasena.

'Pandu had two gems among women as his wives—Kunti and Madri. One day, Pandu went out for a hunt and saw a rishi, in the form of a stag, uniting with a doe. He shot him with an arrow while he was still mounted on the doe, in a state of lust, but without his desire having been satiated. Wounded by the arrow, he told Pandu, "You follow dharma and you know the pleasure that comes from satisfaction of desire. But you have killed me before my desire was satiated. Therefore, you will also be united with the five elements[194] in a similar state, before your desire is satiated." Pandu paled on hearing this curse and from that time, stayed away from uniting with his wives. He told them, "This is the result of my own folly. But I have heard that in the hereafter there are no worlds for those who are childless." Therefore, he asked Kunti to bear children for him and accordingly Kunti bore children. Through Dharma, Yudhishthira. Through Marut, Bhima. Through Shakra, Arjuna. Pandu was pleased and said, "Your co-wife doesn't have children either. Let the right offspring also be fathered on her." Kunti agreed and Nakula and Sahadeva were then fathered on Madri through the Ashvins. One day, Pandu saw Madri dressed in her ornaments and his desire was stirred. But he died as soon as he touched her. Then Madri ascended the funeral pyre with him, requesting Kunti to affectionately rear the twins.

'Later, ascetics took the five Pandavas and Kunti to Hastinapura and introduced them to Bhishma and Vidura. An attempt was made to burn them in the house of lac, but this failed, because of Vidura's counsel. After this, Hidimba was killed and they went to a place named Ekachakra. In Ekachakra, they killed a rakshasa named Baka and then went to the capital of Panchala. Thereafter, they obtained Droupadi as their wife and returned to their own country, in good health. They had skilled sons—Yudhishthira had

Prativindhya, Vrikodara[195] had Sutasoma, Arjuna had Shrutakirti, Nakula had Shatanika and Sahadeva had Shrutakarmana. In a *svayamvara*,[196] Yudhishthira obtained Devika as his wife. She was the daughter of Govasana of the Shibi lineage and through her he had a son named Youdheya. Through a *viryashulka*[197] marriage, Bhima obtained as his wife Baladhara, the daughter of the king of Kashi. Through her, he had a son named Sarvaga. Arjuna went to Dvaravati and obtained Vasudeva's sister Subhadra as his wife. Through her, he had a son named Abhimanyu. Nakula had Karenumati from the Chedi region as his wife and through her had a son named Niramitra. In a svayamvara, Sahadeva obtained Vijaya, daughter of the king of Madra, as his wife and had a son named Suhotra. Before this, Bhima had a son named Ghatotkacha through the rakshasa Hidimba. These are the eleven sons of the Pandavas.

'Abhimanyu married Virata's daughter Uttara. She gave birth to a stillborn child. On the command of Vasudeva, supreme among men, Pritha[198] accepted him in her arms. He said, "I will instill life into this embryo that is six months old." Having revived him, he said, "He was born in a lineage that was diminished.[199] Therefore, he will be known as Parikshit." Parikshit married Madravati and she gave birth to Janamejaya.[200] Through Vapushtama, Janamejaya had two sons named Shatanika and Shanku. Shatanika had a son named Ashvamedhadatta, through a wife from the Videha region. Thus the lineage of Puru and Pandu has been recounted. He who hears about Puru's lineage is freed from all sin.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'There was once a king named Mahabhisha. He was born in the Ikshvaku lineage and was a lord of the earth. He was always truthful and truly valorous. He pleased the lord of the gods through 1000 horse sacrifices and 100 *vajapeya*[201] sacrifices and thus attained heaven.

'One day, the gods went to pay homage to Brahma. Many rajarshis and King Mahabhisha were also present. Ganga, the best of the rivers, also came to pay homage to the grandfather. Her garments, as white as moonlight, were blown away by the wind and immediately the masses of gods lowered their faces. However, rajarshi Mahabhisha continued to stare unabashedly at the river. Because of this, Mahabhisha was cursed by the illustrious Brahma. "You will be born on earth and then you will again regain these worlds." The king then thought about all the kings and ascetics on earth and chose the immensely radiant Pratipa as his father. On seeing King Mahabhisha lose his composure, the best of the rivers went away, thinking about him in her mind. Along her path, she saw the divine vasus. They were crestfallen and dark with despair at having been dislodged from heaven.

'On seeing them in that state, the great river asked, "O residents of heaven! Why are

your forms destroyed? Why are you in despair?" The divine vasus replied, "O great river! We have been severely cursed by the great-souled Vashishtha for a minor transgression. Not seen by us, that supreme of rishis was engaged in his twilight rites and in our folly we crossed him. In his anger, he cursed us that we would be born in a womb. It is not possible to negate what the brahman-knowing one has said. Therefore, become a woman on earth and bear the vasus as your sons. We cannot enter the womb of an impure woman." Having been thus addressed, Ganga agreed and asked, "Which supreme man will be your father?" The vasus replied, "In the world of men, a son will be born to Pratipa. He will be King Shantanu, devoted to dharma, and he will be our father." Ganga said, "O unblemished gods! I was thinking exactly the same. I will do that which brings pleasure to him and also satisfy your wishes." The vasus replied, "O revered one who dwells in the three worlds![202] You must hurl your sons into the water as soon as they are born, so that we are quickly freed and don't suffer for a long time." Ganga said, "I will do what you wish. But so that my union with him is not completely fruitless, let one son remain with him." The vasus replied, "Each one of us will offer one-eighth of our respective energies. From that, a son will be born to you and will live according to your desires. But he will have no children on earth. Therefore, this valorous son of yours will remain without a son." Making this agreement with Ganga, the vasus happily went away to the place where they dwelt.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'King Pratipa was always devoted to the welfare of all beings. He spent many years in meditation, on the banks of the Ganga. Then Ganga assumed the form of a woman who was beautiful and had all the qualities. She arose from the waters in this desirable form. The rajarshi was studying.

'This divine and intelligent one with a beautiful face came and sat on his right thigh, which was like a *shala* tree. Pratipa, lord of the earth, asked the intelligent one, "O fortunate one! What can I do to bring you pleasure? What is your desire?" The lady said, "O king! O best of the Kurus! I desire you. I offer myself. Accept me and love me in return. Those who are wise always consider evil the act of refusing a woman who is full of desire." Pratipa replied, "O beautiful one! Out of desire, I can never go to another man's wife or to one who is not equal to me in varna. O fortunate one! Know that this is the vow I have taken for the sake of dharma." The lady said, "I am never undesirable. I am never one with whom union is forbidden. I am never malignant. I am a divine lady and supreme in beauty. O king! Love me, as I wish to love you." Pratipa replied, "I must refrain from doing what brings you pleasure. I have taken a vow and if I break it, dharma will bring about my destruction. O beautiful lady! You have seated yourself on my right thigh. O timid one! That is the seat earmarked for daughters and daughters-in-law. The left is the seat for the woman one finds pleasure with. But you have rejected it.

O beautiful one! Therefore, I cannot satisfy desire with you. O fortunate one! I accept you for my son. Be my daughter-in-law. The left thigh is for the wife, but you have not accepted that." The lady said, "O one who is learned in dharma! Let it be as you say. Let me be united with your son. Out of my love for you, I will love the famous Bharata lineage. Your dynasty is the refuge of all the kings on earth. Even if I take 100 years, I will not be able to recount the qualities of this dynasty, whose fame and righteousness is supreme. But he must not know my high birth. Nor must he ever question what I do. Living with your son in this way, I will make him happy and bring about his welfare. Because of his sons, his righteous conduct and his merits, your son will attain heaven." O king! Having said this, she disappeared.

'The king waited for his son to be born and for the promise to be fulfilled. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! Meanwhile, Pratipa, bull among the Kshatriyas, performed austerities with his wife, so as to obtain a son. Though they were old, a son was born to them and this son was Mahabhisha. He was known as Shantanu, because he was born when his father had controlled his senses.[203] Remebering that the eternal worlds can only be conquered through one's own deeds, Shantanu, supreme of the Kuru lineage, devoted himself to sacred conduct. When his son Shantanu became a youth, Pratipa told him, "O Shantanu! Earlier, a lady had approached me for your welfare. O son! If that divine and beautiful lady comes to you in secret and desires you so as to obtain offspring, you must not question her about who she is and who she belongs to. O unblemished one! You must not question any of her acts. I tell you that you must love her as she loves you." Having thus commanded his son and instated him on the throne, King Pratipa departed for the forest.

'King Shantanu was intelligent and became a famous archer on earth. He loved hunting and spent a lot of time in the forest. Once, that best of kings killed many deer and buffaloes. Wandering alone along the banks of the Ganga, he came to a place frequented by the siddhas and the charanas. One day, the king saw there a supreme woman, dazzling in her beauty like the lotus-seated Shri[204] herself. Her body was faultless and her teeth were beautiful. She was adorned with divine ornaments. She was alone and she wore sheer garments that were as beautiful as the filaments of a lotus. The king was astounded at the beauty of her form and the hair on his body stood up in rapture. The lord of men gazed at her with his eyes, but was not satisfied. On seeing the radiant king move around, she also felt love and affection for him and the wanton one wasn't satisfied. The king then addressed her in a gentle voice. "O beautiful one! O one with the slender waist! Are you from the race of gods, demons, gandharvas, apsaras, yakshas or pannagas, or are you human? You seem to be born of the gods. Whoever you are, please be my wife." Hearing these soft words from the smiling king, that unblemished one remembered the promise she had made to the vasus. She spoke to the king, gladdening his heart with her words. "O lord of the earth! I will be your queen and

will obey your words. O king! But you must not interfere in my acts, regardless of whether they please or displease you. You must never try to stop me or speak to me harshly. O king! As long as you act in the way I have asked you to, I will be with you. But I will certainly leave you whenever you try to stop me or speak to me harshly." The best of the Bharata lineage agreed. At that, the lady was delighted to have obtained that supreme of kings as her husband."

'Having obtained her, Shantanu was also delighted. He pleasured with her as he desired and remembering the promise, refrained from asking her anything. The lord of the earth was extremely pleased with her conduct, beauty, generosity, qualities and secret art of love. The divine Ganga, who courses the three worlds, assumed a beautiful and radiant human form and lived happily as an obedient wife to Shantanu, that lion among kings. He was as radiant as the king of the gods himself and his love waxed, as his fortune did. She pleased the king with her skilled love making, intelligence, coquetry and demeanour and the king loved her as much as she did. The king was so addicted to desire and the qualities of his supreme wife that many years, seasons and months passed by without him being aware. When the lord of men thus united with her when desire seized them, eight sons were borne by her, each resembling a god. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! As soon as each son was born, one after another, she flung them into the waters of the Ganga, saying, "This is for your own good." This did not please King Shantanu. But the lord of the earth did not dare to utter a word, for fear of losing her.

'When the eighth son was born and she seemed to be smiling, the king, who desired a son, miserably told her, "Do not kill him. Who are you? Who do you belong to? Why do you kill your sons? As a murderer of your sons, you are committing a great sin. O evil one! Do not commit sin. Desist." Ganga replied, "Since you desire a son, I will not kill this son. You will become the supreme father of a son. But following our agreement, my stay here has come to an end. I am Ganga, the daughter of Jahnu and worshipped by large numbers of maharshis. I have lived with you so far to accomplish the wishes of the gods. These were the eight vasus, immensely fortunate and immensely energetic gods. As a result of a curse imposed by Vashishtha, they had to be born in human form. There was no better father than you on earth and no human mother in this world who could equal me. Therefore, I assumed human form to become their mother. By becoming the father of the eight vasus, you have conquered the eternal worlds. My agreement with the divine vasus was that I should free them from their human birth as soon as each was born. I have thus freed them from the curse imposed by the great-souled Apava.[205] Be fortunate. I must leave now. Rear this son. He will be rigid in his vows. My promise to the vasus that I would live with you is over. Let this son, born from me, be known as Gangadatta.'[206]

‘Shantanu said, “Who was Apava? What evil act was committed by the vasus that they were all cursed to be born in human wombs? What has this son Gangadatta done that he must now live among men? The vasus are lords of all the worlds. O Jahnavi![207] Why were they born among men? Tell me everything.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having been thus addressed, the divine goddess Jahnavi Ganga addressed her husband King Shantanu, bull among men.

‘Ganga said, “O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Varuna once had a son—the sage Vashishtha, later famous as Apava. His holy hermitage was along the side of Meru, the king of the mountains. It was populated with deer and birds and was always covered with flowers. O best of the Bharata lineage! Varuna’s son, supreme among those who perform sacred deeds, performed austerities in that forest, which had a plentiful supply of tasty roots, fruit and water. Daksha had a proud daughter named Surabhi. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Through Kashyapa, that goddess gave birth to a cow for the welfare of that entire world. This supreme cow was capable of fulfilling every desire. Varuna’s righteous son obtained this cow for the sake of performing sacrifices and the cow lived in that forest, populated by sages. Fearlessly, she grazed in those sacred and lovely woods. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Once, all the divine vasus, with Prithu at their head, came to visit that forest, frequented by the gods and the devarshis. With their wives, they roamed in the forest and made love in its lovely mountains and woods. O you who are as valorous as Vasava[208] himself! A slender-waisted wife of one of the vasus saw the supreme cow, which belonged to the sage Vashishtha and was capable of fulfilling every desire, roaming in the forest. She was amazed at its conduct, power and riches and showed it to Dyou,[209] who had eyes like those of a bull.

‘“The cow was well fed and yielded plenty of milk. It had a beautiful tail and handsome face. It had all the qualities and was supreme in its conduct. O lord of kings! O descendant of the Puru lineage! So great were its qualities that the vasu’s wife showed it to the vasu. O you who are like the king of elephants! O you who are like Indra in valour! Dyou saw that cow, with its beauty and qualities. O king! He then told the goddess, ‘O goddess with the dark eyes! O one with the beautiful hips! O one with slender waist! This supreme cow belongs to the rishi who is Varuna’s son. He is the owner of this supreme forest. A person who drinks this cow’s tasty milk will live for 10,000 years with undiminished youth.’ O supreme among kings! When that slender-waisted goddess of unblemished form heard these words, she told her husband, whose energy was radiant. ‘I have a friend in this world of men and she is the daughter of a king. Her name is Jinavati and she is young and beautiful. She is the daughter of rajarshi Ushinara, who is truthful and intelligent. This daughter is famous in the world of men because of the wealth of her beauty. O immensely fortunate one! I wish to obtain this cow and its calf for her. O best of the gods! O one who increases good deeds! Please bring them quickly. O one who grants pride! On drinking the milk, my friend will

be the only one in the world of men to be freed from age and disease. O immensely fortunate one! O unblemished one! Please do this for me. There is no other pleasure that would please me more.' Hearing the words of the goddess, Dyou wished to please her and stole the cow with the help of Prithu and his other brothers. O king! Instructed by his lotus-eyed wife, Dyou did not think about the great ascetic powers of the rishi who owned her. He failed to consider that the stealing of the cow would lead to his downfall.

'"In the evening, Varuna's son returned to the hermitage with the fruit he had collected. He did not see the cow and her calf in that supreme wood. Then the one blessed with the power of austerities looked for her in the forest. But though he searched, the sage could not find her. Through his divine sight, he then found that she had been stolen by the vasus. His anger arose and he cursed the vasus. 'Because the vasus have stolen my cow which yields sweet milk and has a handsome tail, there is no doubt that they will all be born as men.' O bull among the Bharata lineage! Thus did the illustrious Apava, supreme among sages, curse the vasus in his anger. Having cursed them, the illustrious one returned to his austerities. O king! Thus, in his wrath, did the one blessed with the power of austerities curse the eight vasus. The rishi was immensely powerful and knew the nature of the brahman. As soon as they knew that they had been cursed by the rishi, the gods went to the hermitage of the great-souled one. O bull among kings! The vasus tried to pacify the rishi. O tiger among men! But they failed to obtain the grace of Apava, who was learned in all dharma and was supreme among rishis. The righteous sage said, 'O Dhara! You and the other vasus have been cursed. But you will all be freed from your curse within a year. But Dyou is the one whose act has led to your being cursed by me. Because of his own deeds, he will have to live in the world of men for a long time. Though uttered in anger, my words cannot amount to a falsehood. However, the great-souled one[210] will not have offspring in the world of men. He will be devoted to dharma and will be skilled in the usage of all weapons. He will be engaged in doing that which brings his father pleasure and he will forsake pleasure with women.' Having addressed all the vasus in this way, the great rishi went away. And all the vasus then came to me together.

'"O king! They craved a boon from me. 'O Ganga! As soon as each one of us is born, you should yourself throw us into the water.' O supreme among kings! I agreed and acted accordingly, in order to free them from a life in the world of men, a consequence of the curse. O best of kings! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! O king! Dyou alone will have to live in the world of men for a long time, because of the rishi's curse."'

Vaishampayana said, 'Having completed the account, the goddess immediately vanished. Taking her son with her, she went away to wherever she wished to go. That son of Shantanu came to be known under two names—Devavrata and Gangeya. He surpassed Shantanu in all his qualities. With sorrow in his heart, Shantanu then returned to his own capital. I will now recount for you Shantanu's many qualities and the great

fortune of this famous king, who was from the Bharata lineage and whose illustrious history is known as the Mahabharata.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'King Shantanu was intelligent and was honoured by the gods and the rajarshis. He was devoted to dharma and was famous in all the worlds for being righteous and truthful. Shantanu, bull among men, always displayed self-control, generosity, forgiveness, forbearance, resoluteness, supreme energy and great nobility. The king had all these qualities and was also skilled in dharma and artha. He was the protector of the Bharata lineage and all righteous people. His neck was like a conch shell, his shoulders were broad and his strength was like that of a mad elephant. For him, dharma was superior to kama and artha. O bull among men! On seeing that he was devoted to dharma and supreme in the practice of all forms of dharma, all the kings instated him as the king of kings. With that lord of the Bharata lineage as their protector, all the kings on earth were freed from sorrow, fear and anxiety and awoke every morning from sweet dreams. When the world was ruled by kings led by Shantanu, all the varnas followed rules that served the cause of the brahman. Brahmanas were served by Kshatriyas, Kshatriyas were served by Vaishyas. Devoted to Brahmanas and Kshatriyas, Shudras served the Vaishyas. Shantanu lived in Hastinapura, the beautiful capital of the Kurus. He ruled over the entire earth, right up to the boundaries of the oceans. He was devoted to truth and learned in dharma, an equal of the king of the gods. He attained great fortune through the dharma of generosity and austerities. He was free of anger and hatred. He was as pleasant as Soma.[211] He was as energetic as the sun and his speed was like that of Vayu. He was like Yama in anger and like the earth in his patience. O king! When Shantanu ruled the earth, no animals, boars and birds suffered pointless death. Brahmana dharma was always followed in Shantanu's kingdom. He treated all beings equally, without desire and anger. Sacrifices were performed for the worship of gods, rishis and the ancestors. But no being was deprived of its life, other than in accordance with dharma. The king was like a father to those who were miserable, to those who were without a protector and to animals. During the reign of that best of the Kuru lineage, the king of kings, words were embedded in truth and the mind was embedded in generosity and dharma.

'Having pleasured with women for thirty-six years, the king retired to the forest. Shantanu's son, the vasu who was born as Ganga's son and was now named Devavrata, was like him in beauty, conduct, behaviour and learning. He was skilled in the usage of all weapons. Compared to other kings, he was mighty in strength, mighty in power, mighty in valour and mighty as a charioteer.

'Once, when he had shot a deer, King Shantanu followed it along the banks of the river Ganga. He saw that the waters of the Bhagirathi had become shallow. On seeing

this, Shantanu, bull among men, was concerned and wondered, “Why does this best of rivers not flow the way it used to do earlier?” While trying to determine the reason, the great-souled one saw a large youth who was beautiful and handsome of face. He was like the god Purandara[212] himself. He had divine weapons and a bow. Using his sharp arrows, he had stemmed the flow of the river Ganga. On witnessing this wonderful and superhuman feat of checking the Ganga’s course with arrows, the king was astounded. Shantanu had seen his son only once, at the time of birth. Therefore, despite being wise, he did not have sufficient recollection to recognize his own son. As soon as he saw his father, the youth created delusion through his powers and instantly disappeared.

‘When King Shantanu witnessed this, he suspected the youth to be his own son and addressed Ganga, “Show him to me.” Ganga appeared in a supremely beautiful form and showed him the ornamented youth, holding him by the right hand. Though he had known her before, Shantanu failed to recognize her, since she was adorned with ornaments and wore a garment that gathered no dust.

‘Ganga said, “O king! O tiger among men! This is the eighth son who you fathered on me. Take him home. He has studied the Vedas and the Vedangas from Vashishtha himself. This valorous one is skilled in the usage of all weapons and a supreme archer. In battle, he is like the king of the gods himself. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The gods always revere him and so do the asuras. He has all the knowledge of the Vedas that Ushanas[213] possesses. This great-souled and strong-armed son of yours is also well versed in all the knowledge of the sacred texts and their branches possessed by Angirasa’s son,[214]who is worshipped by the gods and the asuras. He also has the knowledge about weapons possessed by the powerful and invincible rishi who is the son of Jamadagni.[215] O king! Your son is a great archer and also has knowledge about dharma and artha, as practised by kings. O brave one! I am myself giving you my brave son. Take him home.”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Having been thus addressed by Ganga, Shantanu accepted his son, who was as radiant as the sun, and returned to his capital. When he reached his city, which was like Purandara’s[216] city, the descendant of the Puru lineage was happy and thought that all his desires had been fulfilled. He instated his great-souled son, who had all the qualities, as the heir apparent. O bull among the Bharata lineage! The immensely famous son won, through his conduct, the affection of everyone in the Puru lineage, his father and the kingdom. Thus the lord of the earth, who was unlimited in valour, enjoyed himself with his son for four years.

‘One day, the lord of the earth went to a forest that was along the Yamuna River. While he was wandering around, he inhaled an extremely sweet fragrance that came from an unknown direction. Searching for the cause, he saw a lady from the fisherman tribe who was as beautiful as a goddess. On seeing that dark-eyed lady, he asked, “O

timid one! Who are you and whose are you? What are you doing here?" She replied, "O great-souled one! I belong to the fishermen tribe. Following the dharma prescribed for us, I ply a boat on the instructions of my father, who is the king of the fishermen." Having seen her beauty and sweetness, equal to that of a goddess, and inhaled her fragrance, King Shantanu desired the lady from the fishermen tribe. He went to her father and asked him to give her to him. The king of the fishermen told the king, "From the day she was born, I have known that I will have to give my beautiful daughter to someone. O lord of men! However, there was a desire in my heart and let me tell you that now. O unblemished one! If you desire to take her as your wife in accordance with dharma, you must truthfully make a pledge to me, because I know that you are true to your word. O king! If you make that pledge, I will give my daughter to you, because I will never be able to find a husband for her who is like you." Shantanu replied, "O fisherman! It is only after hearing what you ask for, that I can say whether I can or cannot. If it is something that can be granted, I will do so, but not otherwise." The fisherman replied, "O lord of the earth! The son who will be born from her will be instated king of the earth after you and no one else." O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Though his body burnt with the sharp pains of desire, Shantanu was unwilling to grant this boon to the fisherman. The lord of the earth returned to Hastinapura, thinking about the daughter of the fisherman and with his heart burdened by sorrow.

'One day, his son Devavrata came to Shantanu when he was thus meditating and thinking sorrowfully, and told his father, "Everything is peaceful. All the kings obey you. Why are you then always sorrowful, as if in pain? O king! Immersed in your own thoughts, you do not utter a word." Having been thus addressed by his son, Shantanu replied, "Wihout a doubt, I am always meditating, just as you say. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! You are the only son in this great lineage of ours. O son! I sorrow because of the impermanence of this mortal life. O son of Ganga! If anything happens to you, this lineage of ours will cease to exist. There is no doubt that you are superior to 100 great sons. Therefore, without reason, I do not wish to have another wife. I only wish that you are fortunate, fulfil your desires and have sons so that our lineage survives. However, those who are learned in dharma say that having one son is like having no son at all. Agnihotra,[217] the three Vedas[218] and sacrifices that involve a lot of alms are together not worth one-sixteenth part of having a son. This is true of man and all beings. O immensely wise one! On this, I have no doubts. That is what the eternal and supreme three[219] and Puranas say. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! You are brave, never forgive and are always armed. O unblemished one! There is every possibility of your being killed through weapons. If that happens, I worry about how I can possibly find peace. O son! Now I have completely told you the reason for my sorrow." Having heard this complete reason, the immensely intelligent Devavrata began to think about this. He then went and asked an old adviser, who was always concerned

about his father's welfare. He asked him the reason for his father's misery. O bull among the Bharata lineage! On being asked by the foremost among the Kurus, he told him truthfully about the boon that had been asked for the lady.

'Then Devavrata took many old Kshatriyas with him and went to see the king of the fishermen. On his father's behalf, he himself asked for the daughter. The fisherman received him and paid him homage, in accordance with what was prescribed. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When he was seated in the king's assembly, he said, "O bull among men! You are an adequate protector for Shantanu. You are his son and he is the best of fathers. How can I say anything against your words? Even if the bride's father is Shatakratu[220] himself, he cannot but be pained at having to reject such a honourable and desirable union of wombs. The famous Satyavati was born from the seed of an arya who is equal in qualities to you. He has often told me about your father's achievements. He has told me that among all the kings, he is most suited to marry Satyavati. In earlier times, I have refused the famous devarshi Asita, when that supreme of rishis came and asked for Satyavati. O bull among the Bharatas! However, as the girl's father, there is sometime I must say. There is one strong objection that I can see. O scourge of your enemies! Whoever is your rival, gandharva or asura, will not live happily if you are angry. O king! This is the only fault with the marriage and no other. O scourge of your enemies! O fortunate one! Know that this is all I have to say in the matter of giving and taking." O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Having heard this, for the sake of his father and in the hearing of the kings, Ganga's son uttered the following words in reply. "O supreme among truthful ones! Listen to the truthful vow I take today. The man has not been born, nor will ever be born, who will dare to utter words like these. I will do what you have asked for. The son who will be born from her will be the king." O bull among the Bharata lineage! At these words, the fisherman spoke again, desiring to accomplish the difficult task of obtaining the kingdom. "O lord! You are an adequate protector for the radiant Shantanu and also for the lady. Your heart is in dharma and you are also lord of the act of granting.[221] O equable one! However, there is something else that needs to be said and done. Listen to me. O conqueror of enemies! This must be said for the welfare of daughters. O you who are devoted to truth and all dharma! The vow that you have taken, in the midst of all these kings, for Satyavati's sake is worthy of you. O mighty-armed one! I have no doubt that it will never be violated by you. But I do have great doubts about the sons who will be born to you." O king! Knowing what was on his mind, the one who was devoted to truth and all dharma wished to do that which would bring pleasure to his father and made a promise. "O king of fishermen! O supreme among kings! Listen to these words of mine. In front of these lords of the earth, hear what I have to say for my father's sake. O lord of men! I have already relinquished my right to the kingdom. I will not destroy the doubt that has arisen about my sons. O fisherman! From today, I take the vow of

*brahmacharya*. Even if I die without a son, I will attain the eternal world of heaven." When he heard these words, the fisherman's body hair rose up in delight.

'He told the one who had dharma in his heart[222] that he was prepared to give. From the sky, apsaras, gods and rishis rained down flowers and said, "He is Bhishma."[223] For his father's sake, he then told the famous one, "O mother! Please ascend this chariot and let us go to our own home." Having uttered these words, Bhishma made the beautiful lady ascend the chariot and, arriving in Hastinapura, he told Shantanu all that had happened. Then all the kings praised him for his difficult feat and jointly and individually said, "He is Bhishma." Witnessing the difficult feat accomplished by Bhishma, his father Shantanu was pleased and granted him the boon that he would only die when he himself so willed.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'O king! After the marriage was over, King Shantanu instated the beautiful lady in his own house. Then Satyavati bore Shantanu a wise and brave son named Chitrangada. He was superior to all men in valour. Then Satyavati again bore the powerful king another son. He was named Vichitravirya and he became a great archer. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Before he could become an adult, the wise King Shantanu succumbed to the law of destiny. Bhishma was always obedient to Satyavati. When Shantanu went to heaven, he instated Chitrangada, chastiser of enemies, on the throne. Through his valour, Chitrangada defeated all the kings. He could not find anyone equal to himself among men.

'When he had defeated all gods, men and asuras, the powerful king of the gandharvas, who bore the same name as him,[224] came to him. On the fields of Kurukshetra, a great battle took place between these two powerful warriors, the king of the gandharvas and the king of the Kurus. On the banks of the river Hiranyavati, the battle went on for three years. In that great duel, characterized by a shower of weapons, the gandharva used superior powers of delusion[225] to kill the supreme among the Kurus. Having killed Chitrangada, the best of the Kurus and one who yielded wonderful bows and arrows, the gandharva went to heaven.

'O king! When that tiger among men, the one with a lot of energy, was killed, Shantanu's son Bhishma performed the funeral rites. Then the mighty-armed one instated Vichitravirya as the king of the Kuru kingdom, though he was still a child and hadn't attained youth. Vichitravirya always listened to Bhishma's words and as a king, ruled the kingdom of his father and grandfather. In accordance with dharma, the king paid homage to Shantanu's son Bhishma, who was skilled in dharma and the sacred texts. In return, Bhishma also protected him.'

Vaishampayana said, 'O, unblemished one! With Chitrangada killed when his brother was still a child, Bhishma ruled over the kingdom. He was always obedient to Satyavati. When he saw that his brother had become an adult, Bhishma, that supreme among intelligent ones, thought about marrying Vichitravirya off. O king! Bhishma heard that the three daughters of the king of Kashi, all equal to apsaras, would be married through a svayamvara. With his mother's permission, the best of charioteers wore his armour and with a single chariot, set out for the city of Varanasi.

'There Shantanu's son Bhishma saw the three ladies and the prosperous kings who had come from all directions. O king! When the names of all the thousands of kings were being recounted, the lord Bhishma himself arrived there. O king! Raising the ladies onto his chariot, Bhishma, supreme among warriors, addressed the kings in a voice that was like thunder. "The learned have said that daughters may be given to virtuous men who have been invited, with ornaments, depending on one's power. Others can give after accepting riches,[226] others after accepting a couple of cows. Some give their daughters after accepting a price. Others take them away by force. Some women are taken involuntarily. Others are married with their consent. This is the eighth form of marriage, svayamvara, which learned ones remember and kings praise.[227] However, those who know dharma have said that the bride who is taken away by force is the best. O rulers of the earth! I am therefore taking these maidens away by force. Use all your strength to try and defeat me, or be defeated instead. O lords of the earth! I am standing here, resolved to do battle." Challenging the kings and the king of Kashi in this way, the valorous Kourava raised the maidens onto his chariot and inviting them to fight, swiftly drove off with the maidens.

'All the kings arose in great anger, slapping their arms and grinding their teeth. They quickly cast off their ornmaments and donned their armour, creating a great uproar. O Janamejaya! The radiant ornaments and armour resembled shooting stars. Their brows were contracted and their faces red with anger. The ornaments and armour dangled, as the brave ones dashed towards the chariots the charioteers had brought, yoked with excellent horses. Armed with all kinds of weapons, they ascended the chariots and went in pursuit of the Kourava, who was in a solitary chariot. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Then the hair-raising battle between the one and the many occurred. The kings hurled 10,000 arrows at him at the same time. However, before they could reach, Bhishma sliced all of them off. Then all the kings surrounded him from all directions and rained arrows down on him, like a mountain being showered with clouds of rain. But he stopped all the showers of arrows with his own and pierced each of the kings with three arrows. Such was the charioteer's skill in defending himself in battle, as compared to that of other men, that his enemies applauded him. Having defeated all of them in battle, the one who was supreme among those who were skilled in arms, the descendant

of the Bharata lineage, left with maidens for the land of the Bharatas.

'Then, in the battle, the maharatha King Shalva, whose spirit was indomitable, struck Shantanu's son Bhishma from the back. He was like a bull elephant that was the leader of its herd, using its tusks to attack a rival from the rear, when it was mounting a cow elephant in heat. The king told Bhishma, "Stay, stay." The mighty-armed King Shalva was driven by his anger. Bhishma, tiger among men and destroyer of enemy armies, was angered at these words. Blazing like a fire that was without smoke, he followed the dharma of Kshatriyas and without any signs of fear, the maharatha turned his chariot towards Shalva. On seeing him turn, all the other kings wished to witness the duel between Bhishma and Shalva. Like two powerful and raging bulls fighting over a cow in heat, the two turned on each other with great strength. King Shalva, best among men, covered Shantanu's son Bhishma with hundreds and thousands of swift arrows. On seeing that Shalva had first covered Bhishma, the assembled kings were astounded and exclaimed, "Blessed, blessed." All the kings saw his dexterity in battle and delightedly applauded King Shalva. Hearing the shouts of the Kshatriyas, Shantanu's son Bhishma, the conqueror of hostile cities, was incensed and cried, "Stay, stay." He angrily commanded his charioteer, "Drive up to that king. I will instantly kill him, the way the king of birds[228] kills a snake." O lord of men! The Kourava then attached the varuna weapon to his bow and used it to wound King Shalva's four horses. O tiger among men! The Kourava used his weapons to fend off all of King Shalva's weapons and used a single arrow to kill his charioteer and with another weapon, he killed the excellent horses. For the sake of the maidens, Shantanu's son Bhishma defeated that supreme among kings, but let him off with his life. O bull among the Bharatas! Thereupon, Shalva left for his own city. O conqueror of enemy cities! The kings who had come to witness the svayamvara also departed for their own kingdoms.

'Bhishma, supreme among those who wielded arms, thus won the maidens and left for Hastinapura, where the king of the Kouravas[229] was. O king! Within a short time, the valorous one who killed innumerable men in battle but was himself never hurt, passed many forests, rivers and mountains with trees in them. The great-souled son of the one who goes into the ocean[230] took care of the daughters of the king of Kashi like daughters-in-law, younger sisters or daughters and brought them to the land of Kuru. Bhishma had brought the ones who had all the qualities by force and gave them to his younger brother Vichitravirya. The one who was learned in dharma accomplished this superhuman deed in accordance with dharma and began to make arrangements for his brother Vichitravirya's marriage, following the consultation with Satyavati.

'When Bhishma was preparing for the wedding, the eldest daughter of the king of Kashi, one who was devoted to the truth, came and told him, "I have earlier chosen the king of Soubha[231] as my husband. Earlier, he has also accepted me and this is my

father's desire too. At the svayamvara, I would have chosen Shalva as my husband. You know dharma well. Now knowing this, decide what the course of dharma entails." At these words of the maiden, spoken in an assembly of Brahmanas, the brave Bhishma began to think about what should be done. After consulting the Brahmanas, who were learned in the Vedas, the one who had knowledge about dharma, gave permission to Amba, the eldest daughter of the king of Kashi, to leave. In accordance with the prescribed rites, he then gave the two others, Ambika and Ambalika, in marriage to his younger brother Vichitravirya.

'Vichitravirya had dharma in his soul. But when he had accepted their hands, since he was proud of his beauty and youth, desire took over his soul. They were tall. Their heads were covered with blue-black hair that was curled. Their nails were red and pointed. Their breasts and hips were heavy. They felt they had obtained a husband who was their equal in beauty and the fortunate ones worshipped Vichitravirya. He matched the Ashvins in beauty and was the equal of the gods in his prowess. He was capable of stirring the hearts of all women. The lord of the earth pleasured with his wives for seven years. Though young, he was then attacked by consumption. His friends consulted physicians to try and find a cure. But like the setting sun, the Kourava went to Yama's abode. In accordance with Satyavati's wishes, Bhishma, together with the priests and the chiefs among the Kurus, performed the funeral rites for King Vichitravirya.'

97

Vaishampayana said, 'Satyavati was miserable and unfortunate and grieved over her son. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! With her daughters-in-law, she performed the funeral rites for her son. Then the illustrious one turned her mind to dharma and the preservation of the paternal and maternal lineages. The immensely fortunate one told Ganga's son, "The perpetuation of Shantanu's dharma, the lineage and fame of the Kuru dynasty, the deeds of progeny and the offering of oblations to ancestors is now vested in you. Just as the attainment of heaven is certain when one performs good deeds, just as a long life is certain when it is based on truth, it is certain that dharma cannot be separated from you. You know dharma and its parts. Dharma is established in you. You are learned in all the sacred texts, the Vedas and the Vedangas. In preserving the customs and virtue of the family and in deciding what should be done in times of distress, you are like Shukra or Angirasa's son.[232] O supreme among those who hold up dharma! Therefore, I am depending on you. I will ask you to perform an act. When you have heard it, please do it. O bull among men! My valorous son was your brother and you loved him a lot. He has ascended to heaven, though but a child. Your brother's queens are the fortunate daughters of the king of Kashi and they possess youth and beauty. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! They yearn for sons. O immensely fortunate one! Therefore, so that the lineage continues, beget offspring on them. At my

request, perform this act of dharma. Instate yourself on the throne and rule over the kingdom of the Bharatas. In accordance with dharma, take a wife and do not immerse your ancestors in hell." The conqueror of enemies was thus addressed by his mother and his friends.

'But the one who followed dharma replied in accordance with dharma. "O mother! What you have said is certainly sanctioned by supreme dharma. But for the sake of the kingdom, you know about the vow I have taken about not having offspring. O Satyavati! You also know about the price that had to be paid for you and about the occurrence thereafter. I will again repeat the truthful pledge that I then took. I can give up the three worlds. I can also renounce the kingdom of the gods, or anything that is greater than both of these. But I can never go back on the truth. The earth can give up its fragrances, the water can give up its juices, light can give up its diverse forms, wind can give up its sense of touch, the sun can give up its radiance, the smoke-crested flame can give up its heat, the sky can give up its sounds, the moon can give up its cool rays, the slayer of Vritra[233] can give up his valour, the god of dharma can give up dharma, but I can never give up the truth." Having been thus addressed by her son, who was endowed with great energy, the mother Satyavati then told Bhishma, "I know that you are always established in the truth and that truth is your strength. If you wish, you can create another three worlds with your own energy. I know that the vow of truth you took was for my sake. But you know the calamity that has now arisen and you know about dharma at such times. Also remember the duty to your ancestors. O one who is never defeated! Act in a way that dharma is not destroyed and our lineage is not broken. Do what doesn't make our friends grieve." Having been thus repeatedly addressed by his miserable mother, who was grieving for her son, in words that represented a deviation from dharma, Bhishma again said, "O queen! Look at dharma. Otherwise, you will bring all of us to ruin. The norms of dharma never praise a deviation from the truth by Kshatriyas. O queen! In order to prevent Shantanu's lineage from becoming extinct, I will tell you the eternal dharma of Kshatriyas. Hearing this, after consulting priests and those wise ones who know about the dharma that should be followed in time of calamities, determine what is best for the welfare of the world."'

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'Bhishma said, "Jamadagni's son Rama[234] was angry when his father was killed and in his anger, the immensely illustrious one killed the king of the Haihayas.[235] He sliced off Arjuna's 1000 arms. Then he again took up his bow to conquer the world. Using his wonderful weapons, the great-souled descendant of Bhargava used his arrows to exterminate Kshatriyas from the world twenty-one times. Then Kshatriya women everywhere had offspring through Brahmanas who were self-controlled. The Vedas

clearly say that a son so born belongs to the one who accepted the hand.[236] With dharma in their minds, they united with the Brahmanas. The world has thus seen the resurgence of the Kshatriyas.

'"In earlier times, there was a famous and wise rishi named Utathya. His wife was named Mamata and he loved her dearly. Utathya's younger brother was the immensely energetic Brihaspati, the priest of the gods. He desired Mamata and sought to unite with her. Mamata told her brother-in-law, who was most eloquent in speech, 'I am pregnant through your older brother. Therefore, desist. O illustrious Brihaspati! Utathya's son is in my womb and has studied the Vedas and the Vedangas there. Your semen is infallible and, therefore, this is not possible. Do not desire me today.' At these words, the immensely energetic Brihaspati could not suppress his desire, though he had achieved self-control. The desiring one united with her, though she did not desire him in return. When he spilt his semen, the embryo inside the womb said, 'O father! There is no room inside for two of us. I was here first and you have unnecessarily wasted your semen.' At this, the illustrious rishi Brihaspati was angry and cursed Utathya's son, who was in the womb. 'You have spoken at a time that all beings crave for. Therefore, you will enter a long period of darkness.' From this curse was born the rishi Dirghatama.[237] He was Brihaspati's equal in great deeds and great energy. To extend Utathya's lineage, the famous rishi had sons like Goutama and others, all immensely famous.

'"But Goutama and the other sons were overcome by greed and delusion. They tied him to wood and threw him into the waters of the Ganga. 'This man[238] is blind and old. Why should we support him?' Thinking in this way, the cruel ones returned home. O king! The rishi then floated along the river, blindly passing many kingdoms on the raft. One day, a king named Bali, who was learned in all aspects of dharma, had come to the water and saw him floating along in the current. O bull among men![239] The righteous Bali found his strength in truth. He knew who he was and grasped him, so that he could obtain sons. He said, 'O illustrious one! Honour me. I have to obtain sons through my wife. Therefore, father sons who are knowledgeable in dharma and artha.' Thus addressed, the energetic rishi agreed. The king then sent his wife Sudeshna to him. But knowing that he was old and blind, the queen did not go to him. Instead, she demeaned him and sent her ignorant Shudra nurse. The righteous rishi then fathered eleven sons on the Shudra woman, the first of whom was named Kakshivat. When he saw Kakshivat and all the other sons studying, the valorous king was delighted and told the rishi, 'These are mine.' 'No,' said the maharshi and continued, 'I have fathered Kakshivat and the others on a Shudra woman. Your queen Sudeshna discovered that I was blind and old. In her folly, she insulted me and sent her Shudra nurse to me.' Bali then pacified that supreme of rishis and again sent his wife Sudeshna to him. Dirghatama felt the queen's limbs and told her, 'You will have a powerful son who will be devoted to the

truth.' Thus the rajarshi Anga was born from Sudeshna. In this way, many Kshatriyas who were great archers were born from Brahmanas. They were supremely learned in dharma, valorous and had great strength. O mother! Having heard this, you should do as you desire."'

99

'Bhishma said, "O mother! Listen to me as I again tell you how the Bharata dynasty can be certainly extended through sons. Let a Brahmana with all the qualities be invited. Let him father sons on Vichitravirya's field."'[240]

Vaishampayana said, 'Satyavati then spoke to Bhishma, in a smiling and bashful voice. "O mighty-armed descendant of the Bharata lineage! You have spoken the truth. Because I have confidence in you, I will now say what needs to be done to continue the lineage. Learned as you are about what dharma permits in times of distress, you will not be able to reject it. You are the dharma of our dynasty, you are truth, and you are its supreme recourse. Therefore, hear what I have to say and then act accordingly. My father was a righteous man and for the sake of dharma, he maintained a boat. In the prime of my youth, I once plied that boat. The supreme rishi Parashara, greatest among those who know dharma, came to the boat because he wanted to cross the river Yamuna. When I was taking him across the river, the best of sages felt desire for me. He approached me and pacified me in gentle words. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! I was scared of his curse and I was also frightened of my father. I could not refuse him. Therefore, I obtained a boon from him, one that is difficult to get. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! I was a young girl and he overcame me with his energy in the boat. But he enveloped the world with a dense fog. Earlier, a foul smell of fish used to come from my body. But the sage removed that and gave me this divine fragrance. Then the sage told me that once I had delivered my son on an island in the river, I would once again become a virgin. Thus was born the great rishi famous as Dvaipayana, Parashara's son. He is a great yogi and was born to me while I was still a virgin. That illustrious rishi has used the power of his austerities to divide the Vedas into four parts. He is known in all the worlds as Vyasa.[241] Because he is dark, he is also known as Krishna. He is always devoted to the truth, has destroyed his sins and is an ascetic who is free from all passion. Asked by me and also asked by you, that immeasurably radiant one will surely agree to father excellent sons on your brother's field. He has told me to think of him whenever a task has to be accomplished. O mighty-armed Bhishma! If you so desire, I will think of him now. O Bhishma! If you are willing, I am sure the great ascetic will father sons in Vichitravirya's field." When the maharshi's name was mentioned, Bhishma joined his hands and said, "He who knows the three objectives of dharma, artha and kama and takes a decision after weighing how artha leads to more artha, dharma leads to more dharma and kama leads to more kama, singly and jointly,

he is truly wise. What you have said is in line with dharma and is also for the welfare of our lineage. It is the best course and I approve." O descendant of the Kuru lineage! When Bhishma approved, Kali[242] thought of the sage Krishna Dvaipayana.

'The wise one was then busy interpreting the Vedas. When he learnt that his mother was thinking about him, he appeared at once. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! She welcomed her son in accordance with the proper rites. Then she embraced him with her arms and bathed him with her tears, since the daughter of the fishermen tribe had seen her son after a long time. On seeing her weep, maharshi Vyasa, who was her eldest son, washed her face with water and paid homage. He said, "I have come to accomplish the task you desire. You know the ways of dharma. Therefore, tell me what you wish me to do and I will do what pleases you." The priest then worshipped that supreme among rishis and welcomed him with the prescribed mantras.

'When he was seated, his mother asked him about his welfare. After making the usual inquiries, Satyavati looked at his face and said, "O wise one! There is no doubt that sons are born from both the father and the mother. There is no doubt that they are their father's property as much as they are their mother's. According to destiny, you are my oldest son. O brahmarshi! In that way, Vichitravirya is my youngest. Therefore, just as Bhishma is Vichitravirya's brother on the father's side, you are his brother on the mother's side. This is my view and I do not know what yours is. Truth provides valour to Shantanu's son and he is devoted to the truth. For the sake of that, he is mentally unwilling to beget offspring or rule over the kingdom. O unblemished one! Out of respect for your brother, for the sake of preserving Shantanu's lineage, to keep Bhishma's request and mine, out of compassion for all beings and to protect everyone, without any cruelty in your heart, do what I am asking you to do. Your younger brother has left two wives who are as beautiful as goddesses. They are in the full bloom of youth and beauty and desire to have sons, in accordance with dharma. O son! Therefore, beget sons who are worthy of carrying forward our lineage on them. You alone are worthy." Vyasa replied, "O Satyavati! You know dharma, in this world and the next. Your mind is always fixed on dharma and in furthering the cause of dharma. With dharma as the objective, I will do what you are commanding me to do. This is an eternal practice. For my brother, I will produce sons who are the likes of Mitra and Varuna. Let the queens observe the vow I indicate for one year. They will then be purified. No woman can unite with me without having observed a rigid vow." Satyavati said, "Take steps so that the queens can conceive immediately. The gods do not shower rain in a country that is without a king. O lord! How can a country that has no king be protected? Therefore, let the conception take place and Bhishma will protect the wombs." Vyasa replied, "If I have to produce a son for my brother quickly and before the appointed time, they must observe the supreme vow that they will have to tolerate my ugliness. If Kousalya[243] can bear my smell, my form, my attire and my body, she wil conceive an excellent son

today.” Having uttered these words and pending the time of union, the hermit disappeared.

‘The queen then went and met her daughters-in-law in private and told them what was in accordance with dharma and artha and for the sake of welfare. “O Kousalya! Listen to what I have to say. This is in accordance with dharma. On account of my misfortune, the Bharata lineage is about to become extinct. On seeing my misery at the extinction of his paternal lineage, the wise Bhishma has advised me about what should be done to preserve the dynasty and protect dharma. O daughter! But whether it can be done, depends on you. Accomplish it and revive the lost lineage of the Bharatas. O one with the beautiful hips! Bear a son who is equal in radiance to the king of the gods. He will bear the heavy burden of our lineage and this ancestral kingdom.” She somehow managed to obtain the concurrence of that virtuous one to the proposal, since this was in accordance with dharma. Then she feasted Brahmanas, devarshis and guests.’

Vaishampayana said, 'At the time of her season, when her daughter-in-law had purified herself through a bath, Satyavati led her to the bed and softly told her, "O Kousalya! Your brother-in-law will come to you in the middle of the night and enter you. Wait for him and do not fall asleep." Having heard her mother-in-law's words, the beautiful one lay on the bed in her bedroom and began to think that it would be Bhishma or one of the other chiefs of the Kuru lineage. The rishi who was devoted to the truth had first been appointed for Ambika. He entered her bed while the light from the lamps was still burning. On seeing Krishna's dark visage, matted hair that was the colour of copper, fiery eyes and tawny-brown beard, the queen closed her eyes. But in order to do what his mother desired, he united with her. However, because of fear, the daughter of the king of Kashi was unable to open her eyes. When he emerged, the mother asked the son, "Will she give birth to a son with all the qualities?" Hearing his mother's words, the supremely intelligent and self-controlled Vyasa replied, following what was destined, "The son will have the strength of 10,000 elephants. He will be learned and supreme among rajarshis. He will be immensely fortunate, immensely brave and immensely wise. He will have 100 powerful sons. But because of lack of quality on the part of his mother, he will be blind." Hearing these words, the mother told the son, "O one blessed with the power of austerities! How can a blind one be worthy to be king of the Kuru dynasty? How can he protect the lineage of your relatives and extend the lineage of his ancestors? Therefore, grant a second son to the Kuru lineage." Having promised this, the powerful ascetic departed. In due course, Kousalya gave birth to a son who was blind.

'Once again, the queen spoke to the other daughter-in-law. As before, the unblemished Satya[244] summoned the rishi. In accordance with what he had promised, the maharshi went to Ambalika in the same way. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On seeing him, she was distressed and turned pale. O king! On seeing her frightened, and pale of complexion, Satyavati's son Vyasa told her, "Since you turned pale on seeing my ugliness, you will have a son who will be pale in complexion. O one with the beautiful face. His name will also be Pandu."[245] Having uttered these words, the illustrious and supreme rishi emerged. On seeing him emerge, Satya spoke to her son and he again told her that the son would be pale. On hearing this, the mother asked for another son and the maharshi agreed to his mother's request. When the time came, the queen gave birth to a son who was pale in complexion. But he was handsome and radiant and bore all the auspicious marks. Later, this son gave birth to the five Pandavas, who were great archers.

'When the eldest daughter-in-law was again in season, she[246] again asked her to go. But the one who was as beautiful as a goddess, remembered the form and odour of the maharshi and out of fear did not do what the queen asked her to do. With her ornaments, the daughter of the king of Kashi bedecked a maid servant, making her look

like a beautiful apsara and sent her to Krishna. When the rishi arrived, she arose and paid him her respects. Having respectfully served him, she united with him with his permission. His desire satisfied, the rishi was greatly pleased with her. Having spent all night with her and found pleasure, the maharshi arose to leave and told her, "O fortunate one! You will no longer be a servant. The child in your womb will be devoted to dharma and in all the worlds, he will be supreme among those who are intelligent." This son of Krishna Dvaipayana was known by the name of Vidura, the extremely wise brother of Dhritarashtra and Pandu. As a consequence of the curse imposed by the great-souled Mandavya, Dharma himself was born as Vidura and he was learned in all principles and free from anger and desire. Freed from the debt he had contracted because of dharma, when he met his mother, he again told her that the woman had conceived. He then vanished. Thus sons were born in Vichitravirya's field through Dvaipayana. They were as radiant as children of the gods and extended the Kuru lineage.'

## 101

Janamejaya asked, 'What did Dharma do to warrant a curse? Who was the brahmarshi because of whose curse he was born in the womb of a Shudra woman?'

Vaishampayana said, 'There was a Brahmana who was known by the name of Mandavya. He had perseverance and was learned in dharma. He was devoted to the truth and established in austerities. This great ascetic used to seat himself at the foot of a tree near the entrance to his hermitage. While observing a vow of silence, the great yogi raised his hands up high and meditated. He passed a long time in these austerities.

'One day, some robbers came to his hermitage with stolen property. O bull among the Bharata lineage! They were pursued by many guards. O supreme of the Kuru lineage! The robbers hid their stolen property there. Before the guards came, they also hid themselves in fear. No sooner had they done this, than the army of guards chasing the robbers arrived and saw the rishi. O king! They asked the one blessed with the power of austerities, but he did not move from his posture. "O supreme among Brahmanas! In what direction did the robbers go? O Brahmana! Tell us, so that we can quickly pursue them." O king! Having been thus addressed by the guards, the one blessed with the power of austerities did not utter a single word in reply, good or bad. At that, the king's officers began to search the hermitage and found the robbers and the stolen property hidden there. The guards then began to suspect the hermit himself. Together with the robbers, they seized him and brought him before the king. Along with the robbers, the king sentenced him to death. In their ignorance, the guards impaled the great ascetic on a stake. Having impaled the sage on the stake, the guards then returned to the king with the stolen property they had recovered.

'The righteous Brahmana and rishi remained on the stake for a long time. But though

he had no food, the rishi did not die. O scorcher of enemies! The great-souled one continued to perform austerities on the tip of the stake and summoned the supreme sages there. They were extremely aggrieved on finding him there and in the night returned in the form of vultures from every direction. Having shown themselves in their own forms, they then asked that supreme of Brahmanas, "O Brahmana! We wish to know about the sin you have committed." At that, the tiger among sages told the ones who were blessed with the power of austerities, "Whom shall I blame? There is no one but me who has committed a sin." The king heard that he was a rishi and went there with all his advisers. He pacified the supreme rishi who was impaled on the tip of the stake. "O supreme among rishis! I have caused you harm through delusion and ignorance. I seek your blessings. Please do not be angry with me." On hearing the king's words, the sage was pacified. Having thus pacified him, the king then had him lowered from the stake. When he had lowered him, he tried to draw out the tip of the stake, but was unsuccessful. So he cut it off at the end. In that stage, with the stake still inside him, the sage continued to practise austerities and attained worlds that were difficult to obtain. Therefore, he was known as Animandavya[247] in the world.

'One day, the Brahmana, who was well-versed in dharma and knew the supreme truth, went to the abode of Dharma. On seeing the illustrious Dharma seated, he asked him, "In my ignorance, what sin have I committed? Why have I suffered from such punishment? Tell me the truth immediately and then witness the power of my austerities." Dharma replied, "O one blessed with the power of austerities! You had once pierced an insect in its tail with a blade of grass and you received the fruits of your action." Animandavya said, "You have imposed a grave punishment because of a small fault. O Dharma! Because of this, you will be born as a man in the womb of a Shudra woman. Today, I will lay down a law in this world for the fruits of one's deeds. No sin will be committed by anyone who is below the age of fourteen years.[248] It will be sin only when committed above that age." Because he was cursed by that great-souled ascetic for that sin, Dharma was born as Vidura in the womb of a Shudra woman. He was free from avarice and anger. He was skilled in the knowledge of dharma and artha. He was devoted to the welfare of the Kurus, was far-sighted and equable.'

102

Vaishampayana said, 'After the births of these three sons, Kurujangala, Kurukshetra and the Kurus grew in prosperity. The land produced abundant crops and the harvests were plenty. The clouds showered down rain at the right time. The trees yielded many flowers and fruit. The beasts of burden were happy and so were the animals and the birds. The garlands were fragrant and the fruit was juicy. The cities were full of traders and artisans. The people were brave, learned, honest and happy. There were no robbers and no one did anything that was against dharma. It was as if in all the parts of the country,

Krita Yuga[249] had arrived. The people were devoted to rites of dharma, charity and performance of sacrifices. With love and affection for each other, the subjects grew in prosperity. They were devoid of pride, anger and avarice. They helped each other in becoming prosperous and dharma reigned supreme. The great city[250] was like the ocean. It was full of hundreds of palaces, with gates, arches and turrets that looked like masses of clouds. It looked like Indra's great capital. The people happily enjoyed themselves in rivers, wooded groves, lakes, ponds, hills and beautiful woods. Rivalling the northern Kurus, the southern Kurus walked with siddhas, rishis and charanas. No one was wretched.[251] There was no woman who was a widow. The Kurus increased the loveliness of the country manifold. They built wells, resting places, assemblies, tanks and residences for the Brahmanas. O king! Bhishma protected everything according to righteous conduct. The beautiful country was dotted everywhere with sanctuaries and sacrificial stakes. The country expanded by bringing in other kingdoms into its fold. Upheld by Bhishma, the wheel of dharma rolled on in the kingdom.

'All the inhabitants of the city and the country were always delighted on witnessing the accomplishments of the great-souled princes and feasted. O king! In the houses of the chiefs of the Kurus and in those of the citizens, the expressions "Let us give" and "Let us eat" were constantly heard.

'Right from their birth, Bhishma reared Dhritarashtra, Pandu and the immensely intelligent Vidura as if they were his own sons. They went through rites, they studied and observed vows. When they attained youth, they became skilled in labour, exercise, archery, horsemanship, fighting with clubs, shields and swords, the science of elephants and the sacred texts of ethics. O lord! They studied history, the Puranas and many other branches of learning. They knew all the details of the Vedas, the Vedangas and their theory. The valorous Pandu excelled over all other men in archery. O lord of the earth! Dhritarashtra was stronger than anyone else. O king! In the three worlds, there was no one who was Vidura's equal in his eternal devotion to dharma. For him, dharma was the supreme goal. On seeing that Shantanu's lineage had again been revived, a saying became common in the world and in all the kingdoms. "Among mothers of heroes, the daughters of the king of Kashi; among all countries, Kurujangala; among those who know everything about dharma, Bhishma; and among all cities, Gajasahrya."[252] However, because he was blind, Dhritarashtra did not obtain the kingdom. Nor by law, could Vidura.[253] Therefore, Pandu became the lord of the earth.'

## 103

'Bhishma said, "Our famous dynasty has all the qualities and virtue. Over all the other kings, it has now become the supreme overlord on earth. Earlier, this dynasty was protected by many great-souled kings who knew dharma. Never has our dynasty come

close to destruction. Satyavati, the great-souled Krishna[254] and I have ensured that the likes of you are established, so that the threads of our lineage continue. O son![255] It is my duty, and especially yours, to take measures so that this dynasty expands like the ocean. I have heard of the princess of the Yadavas, a lineage that is equal to ours. There is also Subala's daughter and the daughter of the king of Madra. They are all from good lineages, beautiful and protected by their kin. Those bulls among the Kshatriyas are suitable for an alliance with us. O Vidura! O foremost among those who are wise! I think we should choose them for offspring and the continuation of our lineage. What do you think?"

'Vidura replied, "You are our father. You are our mother. You are our supreme preceptor. Therefore, you yourself decide and do what is good for our lineage."'

Vaishampayana said, 'He[256] heard from the Brahmanas that Subala's daughter, the fortunate Gandhari, had obtained a boon by pleasing Hara, the god who robbed Bhaga of his eyes.[257] She would have 100 sons. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When he heard this, Bhishma, grandfather of the Kurus, sent a message to the king of Gandhara. Because of the blindness, Subala hesitated. But taking into account the famous lineage and the conduct and intelligence of the Kurus, he agreed to give his daughter Gandhari, who was devoted to dharma, to Dhritarashtra.

'O descendant of the Bharata lineage! O king! When Gandhari heard that Dhritarashtra was blind and that both her father and mother had agreed to give her to him, the beautiful one who possessed many qualities picked up a piece of cloth. As devotion to her husband, she tied up her eyes with this, deciding resolutely that she would never experience more than what her husband could. Thereupon, Shakuni, the son of the king of Gandhara, brought his sister to the Kouravas, with a lot of riches. The brave one gave his sister, accompanied by her possessions, and after being honoured by Bhishma, returned to his own city. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Gandhari of the beautiful hips satisfied all the Kurus with her acts, behaviour, attentiveness and conduct. She was devoted to her husband. She did not even mention other men in her speech.'

## 104

Vaishampayana said, 'The chief of the Yadus was named Shura and he was Vasudeva's father. His daughter was named Pritha and her beauty was matchless on earth. Earlier, that valorous one had promised his first-born child to his father's sister's son, because this valorous one had no children. The first-born happened to be a daughter. To do a favour and an act of friendship to his friend, he gave her to the great-souled Kuntibhoja. In her father's[258] house, she was appointed to honour the gods and guests. One day, she happened to tend to the Brahmana who was rigid in his vows and who was known as Durvasa. He was fearsome and was learned in the secret mysteries of dharma. Attending

to his needs in every way, she pleased the self-controlled one. Through his foresight, he knew that she would face the dharma that is indicated for times of distress[259] and need magic. The sage gave her a mantra and said, "Whichever gods you summon through the use of this mantra, will grant you sons through their grace." Having been told this by the Brahmana, she was curious.

'Though still a virgin, the illustrious one summoned the god Arka.[260] She immediately saw the sun, who makes the worlds come alive. On seeing that wonderful sight, the one with the unblemished form was astounded. Tapana,[261] who spreads light, placed an embryo in her womb. Through him, she gave birth to a warrior who was supreme among those who knew the use of all weapons. He was born with natural armour, blessed with good fortune and handsome like a son of the gods. His natural armour and earrings lit up his face. This son was known in all the worlds as Karna. After giving her, the supremely radiant one and the best among those who give, Tapana, restored her virginity and returned to heaven.

'So as to hide her misconduct and frightened of her relatives, Kunti[262] hurled the son, who bore all the auspicious marks, into the water. Radha's illustrious husband,[263] who was the son of a suta, saved the child, and he and his wife brought him up as their son. They gave the child a name. Since he was born with riches, he was given the name of Vasushena. [264] He grew up to be powerful, skilled in the use of all weapons. The valorous one worshipped the sun until his back was burnt. During that time of worship and meditation, there was nothing that the brave, truthful and great-souled one would not give to Brahmanas. Indra, who looks after the welfare of all creatures, came in the form of a Brahmana begging for alms and asked for the radiant natural armour and earrings. Without a thought, and with blood streaming, Karna cut off the natural armour and the earrings and offered them with joined hands. The amazed Shakra[265] gave him a *shakti*[266] and said, "Whoever you wish to kill among the gods, the asuras, humans, gandharvas, uragas and rakshasas with this weapon, will certainly be killed." Earlier, he was known by the name of Vasushena. But after this deed, he became known by the name of Vaikartana Karna.'[267]

105

Vaishampayana said, 'Kuntibhoja's daughter was beautiful and possessed all the qualities. She was always devoted to dharma and great vows. Her father arranged for a svayamvara. She found the handsome Pandu among thousands of powerful kings who had teeth like lions, shoulders like elephants and eyes like bulls. Blessed with unlimited good fortune, Kuru's descendant and Kuntibhoja's daughter were married, like Maghavan with Poulomi.[268]

‘Thereafter, with Devavrata Bhishma, he[269] went to the capital city of the Madra kingdom. Madri, the daughter of the king of Madra, lived there. She was famous in the three worlds and among all the kings for her beauty, which was unmatched on earth. For Pandu’s sake, he bought her with a great deal of riches. Bhishma got the great-souled Pandu married off. O, tiger among men! The people of the world were astonished to see the intelligent Pandu, with a chest like a lion, shoulders like an elephant and eyes like a bull. Pandu had strength, courage and enterprise. After marrying, he decided to conquer the earth and vanquish many enemies.

‘Pandu, lion among men, went to the east and defeated the Dasharnas in battle, thereby spreading the fame of the Kouravas. Then with his army, which had many flags flying and many elephants, horses, chariots and infantry, he attacked Darva, the king of the Magadha kingdom, who was proud of his valour and had made enemies out of all the kings. He was killed in Rajagriha and his treasury, transport and armies seized. Then Pandu went to Mithila and conquered Videha in battle. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Then the fame of the Kurus spread to Kashi, Suhma and Pundra. Through the strength of his own arms. Pandu, the scorcher of foes, burnt kings with the great net of his flaming arrows and his dazzling weapons. He was like a great fire and defeated with his army the kings and their armies. After conquering them, Pandu engaged them in the work of the Kurus. Having been thus vanquished by him, all the kings of the earth recognized him to be the only warrior on earth, like Purandara among the gods. All the lords of the earth came and worshipped him with joined hands. They brought him gems and riches of various kinds—precious stones, pearls, coral, a lot of gold and silver, the best cows, the best horses, the best chariots, elephants, donkeys, camels, buffaloes and some goats and sheep. The king of Nagapura[270] accepted them all.

‘Then, to the delight of his own kingdom and city, Pandu returned to Gajasahrya[271] with his vehicles. “The fame of Shantanu, lion among kings, and of the intelligent Bharata had been destroyed. But those cries and deeds have now been revived by Pandu. Those who had earlier robbed the land of the Kurus and the riches of the Kurus have now been forced to pay tribute by Pandu, the lion of Nagapura.” With happiness and confidence in their hearts, these were the words of the kings, the advisers to the kings and the citizens of the town and the country. With Bhishma at their head, they went out to receive him when he returned. Before they had gone very far, the residents of Nagapura delightedly saw the world full of many captives, myriad gems piled on many vehicles, elephants, horses, chariots, cows, camels and sheep. Following Bhishma, the Kouravas saw all this and could find no end to it. The one who had increased Kousalya’s[272] joy paid homage at his father’s[273] feet. He showed his respects to the citizens of the town and countryside. Bhishma shed tears of joy, now that he was reunited with his son, who had successfully returned after subjugating other kingdoms.

There was the great roar of hundreds of trumpets and drums. As he entered Gajasahrya, he made the citizens everywhere very happy.'

106

Vaishampayana said, 'On Dhritarashtra's command, Pandu offered the riches he had won to Bhishma, Satyavati and their mothers.[274] Pandu also sent a part of the riches to Vidura. The one with dharma in his soul also pleased his relatives by giving them riches. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Then Satyavati, Bhishma and the illustrious Kousalya were given sparkling gems Pandu had won. His mother Kousalya[275] embraced that bull among men, unequalled in his energy, the way Poulomi embraces Jayanta.[276] With the wealth won by that brave warrior, Dhritarashtra performed great sacrifices equivalent to 100 horse sacrifices, in terms of the hundreds and thousands of alms that were given.

'O bull among the Bharata lineage! After some time, having won control over his senses, Pandu retired to the forest with Kunti and Madri. He left his excellent palace and its beautiful beds. He permanently lived in the forest, always hunting. He roamed on the southern slopes of the beautiful Himalaya Mountains and lived on mountain plains, and in forests with gigantic shala trees. With Kunti and Madri, Pandu lived in the forest, like Purandara's handsome elephant[277] between two cow elephants. As the descendant of the Bharata lineage roamed around with his wives, with swords, arrows and bows and clad in wonderful armour, the king who was brave and skilled in the use of all weapons seemed like a god to the forest-dwellers. On Dhritarashtra's command, these men always gave him every object of desire and pleasure in the forest.

'The river's son[278] heard that King Devaka had a daughter born from a Shudra woman[279] and that she was young and beautiful. O bull among men! He asked for her hand, brought her and married her off to the immensely wise Vidura. Through her, Vidura had many sons. They were humble, of good conduct and were equal to him in all the qualities.'

107

Vaishampayana said, 'O, Janamejaya! Thereupon, 100 sons were born to Dhritarashtra through Gandhari. Then beyond these 100, he had one more through a Vaishya. Pandu had five maharatha sons through Kunti and Madri. They were born from the gods so that the lineage could continue.'

Janamejaya asked, 'O best of the Brahmanas! How did Gandhari give birth to 100 sons and how long did it take? How long did they live? How did Dhritarashtra have a son through a Vaishya, despite possessing a wife who was equal to him and who was devoted to dharma and loved him? How were the five maharatha sons born from the

gods, after the great-souled Pandu was cursed? O one blessed with the power of austerities! Tell me all this as it happened and in detail, because I can never be satisfied on hearing the accounts of my relatives.'

Vaishampayana said, 'One day, Dvaipayana arrived, hungry and tired. Gandhari satisfied him and Vyasa gave her a boon that she would have 100 sons who would be the equals of her husband. After some time, she conceived through Dhritarashtra. Gandhari bore the embryo for two years without giving birth and was overcome with grief. Then she heard that a son had been born to Kunti, as radiant as the morning sun. She felt the hardness of her stomach and began to worry, losing her patience. Unknown to Dhritarashtra, Gandhari violently struck her belly and aborted herself, fainting with the pain. A hard mass of flesh, like an iron ball, came out. This was what she had borne in her womb for two years and prepared to throw it away. But learning of this, Dvaipayana quickly came to her. That supreme among those who meditate saw that mass of flesh and asked Subala's daughter, "What have you done?" She truthfully expressed her thoughts to the supreme rishi. "When I heard that Kunti had given birth to her first son, as radiant as the sun, I struck my belly in grief. Earlier, you granted me the boon that I would have a hundred sons. But instead of those 100 sons, this mass of flesh has been born to me." Vyasa replied, "O Subala's daughter! It will be as I have said and not otherwise. I have never uttered a falsehood in jest. Why should I do it when I am in earnest? Quickly bring a hundred pots and fill them up with ghee. Let cool water be sprinkled on this mass of flesh." Being sprinkled with water, that mass of flesh divided itself into a hundred parts. Each part of the embryo was only the size of a thumb. O ruler of the earth! O king! As time passed, that mass of flesh gradually became 101 separate parts.[280] These parts of the embryo were then placed into the pots and these were concealed in a secret spot and carefully guarded. The illustrious one then again told Subala's daughter about how much time should pass before the pots were broken open. After saying this and making the necessary arrangements, the illustrious and wise lord Vyasa went away to the mountainous Himalayas to perform his austerities.

'In due course, King Duryodhana was born first. But King Yudhishthira was the eldest, because he had been born first. As soon as his son was born, Dhritarashtra summoned Brahmanas, Bhishma and Vidura and said, "Prince Yudhishthira is the eldest prince for the extension of our lineage. He will obtain the kingdom through his own qualities and I have nothing to say on this. But will this one become the king after him? Tell me truthfully what must certainly happen." O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When he stopped speaking, carrion eaters, terrible carnivores and howling jackals began to scream from all the directions. O king! On witnessing these terrible and ominous signs, all the Brahmanas and the immensely intelligent Vidura said, "It is clear that this son of yours will bring about the destruction of this lineage. There is peace in abandoning him and great disaster in nurturing him. O lord of the earth! Let ninety-nine sons remain

with you and with the one you can bring about the welfare of the world and the lineage. It is said that abandon one for the sake of the lineage. Abandon a lineage for the sake of a village. Abandon a village for the sake of a country. Abandon the earth for the sake of the soul.” Thus spoke Vidura and all the supreme Brahmanas. But because of affection towards his son, the king did not do this.

‘O king! Within a month, 100 sons were born to Dhritarashtra and a daughter, over and above the 100. When Gandhari was afflicted with her expanding belly, the mighty-armed Dhritarashtra used to have a Vaishya maid in attendance. O king! Within a year, a son was born to Dhritarashtra. O king! He was immensely famous and wise and he was named Yuyutsu, of mixed lineage. Thus, 100 wise, brave and maharatha sons were born to Dhritarashtra and one daughter named Duhshala.’

108

Janamejaya said, ‘O, lord! Recount to me the names of Dhritarashtra’s sons, beginning with the eldest, in the order of their birth.’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Duryodhana, Yuyutsu, Duhshasana, Duhsaha, Duhshala, Jalasandha, Sama, Saha, Vinda, Anuvinda, Durdharsha, Subahu, Dushpradharshana, Durmarshana, Durmukha, Dushkarma, Karna, Vivimshati, Vikarna, Sulochana, Chitra, Upachitra, Chitraksha, Charuchitra, Sharasana, Durmada, Dushpragaha, Vivitsu, Vikata, Urnanabha, Sunabha, Nanda, Upanandaka, Senapati, Sushena, Kundodara, Mahodara, Chitrabana, Chitravarma, Suvarma, Durvimochana, Ayobahu, Mahabahu, Chitranga, Chitrakundala, Bhimavega, Bhimabala, Balaki, Balavardhana, Ugrayudha, Bhimakarma, Kanakayu, Dridhayudha, Dridhavarma, Dridhakshatra, Somakirti, Anudara, Dridhasandha, Jarasandha, Satyasandha, Sadahsuvak, Ugrashrava, Ashvasena, Senani, Dushparajaya, Aparajita, Panditaka, Vishalaksha, Duravara, Dridhahasta, Suhasta, Vatavega, Suvarcha, Adityaketu, Bahvashi, Nagadanta, Ugrayayi, Kavachi, Nishangi, Pashi, Dandadhara, Dhanurgraha, Ugra, Bhimaratha, Vira, Virabahu, Alolupa, Abhaya, Roudrakarma, Dridharatha, Anadhrishya, Kundabhedi, Viravi, Dirghalochana, Dirghabahu, Mahabahu, Vyudhoru, Kanakadhvaja, Kundashi and Viraja. O king! Over and above the hundred, Duhshala was the daughter. I have recounted the names of the one hundred, in accordance with the order of their birth.

‘O king! Know that they were all brave and unrivalled charioteers. They were all skilled in battle, all knowledgeable in the Vedas and wise in the ways of ruling. They were skilled in the science of relationships and were radiant in knowledge. O lord of the earth! When the time was right, Dhritarashtra considered the matter carefully and married them to wives who were their equals. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! With the permission of Subala’s daughter, the king married Duhshala to Jayadratha, the king of Sindhu.’

Janamejaya said, ‘O you who are knowledgeable about the nature of the brahman! You have recounted to me the excellent and superhuman story of the human origins of the sons of Dhritarashtra. O Brahmana! In accordance with birth, you have also told me their names. Now I wish to hear about the Pandavas. They were great-souled and the equal of the king of the gods in valour. You have earlier told me that they were the partial incarnations of the gods themselves.[281]O Vaishampayana! I now wish to hear about their origins and their superhuman deeds. Please tell me all.’

Vaishampayana said, ‘One day, in the great forest frequented by deer and predatory beasts, King Pandu saw a stag that was the leader of its herd mating with a doe. With five swift and sharp arrows that were decorated with golden feathers in their shafts, Pandu shot both the stag and the doe. O king! The stag was actually the immensely energetic son of a rishi, blessed with the power of austerities. The energetic one was uniting with his wife in the form of a deer. While still united with the doe, he fell down on the ground instantly and as he began to lose his senses, lamented in a human voice.

‘The deer said, “Even evil men who are enslaved by lust and anger, are therefore deprived of reason and are always sinful, stay away from such cruel deeds. A man’s judgement does not swallow destiny. Destiny swallows judgement. The wise never sanction anything that is forbidden by destiny. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! You were born in a dynasty that was always devoted to dharma. Overcome by lust and avarice, how have you lost all your reason?” Pandu replied, “O deer! In dealing with deer, kings behave no differently from enemies; they kill them. Therefore, you should not blame me in your delusion. Deer can be killed openly and through trickery. That is the dharma of kings. Since you know that, why are you blaming me? When seated at a sacrifice, the rishi Agastya went on a hunt. He offered each deer in that great forest to all the gods. This is the sanction of dharma. Then why are you reproving me? According to Agastya’s actions, the likes of you are offerings at sacrifices.” The deer said, “Earlier, they never unleashed arrows without considering preparedness.[282] There is a time for this and killing at such times is praised.” Pandu replied, “It is known that killing occurs, whether prepared or unprepared, through different means—strength and sharp arrows. O deer! Why are you blaming me?”

‘The deer said, “O king! I do not blame you because you have killed a deer or because you have caused me injury. But instead of performing such a cruel act, you should have waited until my act of intercourse was complete. This is a time that is for the welfare of all beings and desired by all beings. Which learned one will kill a deer engaged in intercourse in the forest? You have rendered futile my attempt to obtain offspring. O Kourava! O Pourava! This lineage has had rishis and is famous for its righteous acts. This act was unworthy of you. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! This greatly cruel act is condemned in all the worlds. It destroys attainment of heaven and fame and is

against dharma. You are acquainted about pleasures from uniting with women. You also know the sacred texts and norms of dharma. You are the equal of a god. You should not have committed such an act, which is unworthy of reaching heaven. O best of kings! Your duty is to punish men who act cruelly, are engaged in evil acts and have abandoned the three[283] goals. O best of men! O king! What have I done that you killed me? I am a sage in the form of a deer and live on roots and fruit. I always live peacefully in the forest. Since you have caused injury to me, you will certainly be injured. Since you have been cruel to a helpless couple, when you are overcome through the pangs of desire, death will overtake you. I am a sage named Kimdama, unparalleled in austerities. Ashamed of men, I was engaged in intercourse with this deer. Assuming the form of a deer, I roamed with other deer in this dense forest. The sin of killing a Brahmana will not vest on you, since you did that unknowingly. O foolish one! But since you killed me in the form of a deer when I was overcome by desire, you will meet with the same fate that has befallen me. Overcome by desire, when you unite with your loved one, at that very instant, you will depart for the land of the dead. The woman with whom you unite in your last moments will also go to the land of the king of the dead, inescapable for all beings. Out of devotion towards you, that best of intelligent ones will follow you. You have now brought me into grief when I was in the midst of pleasure. Like that, you will be afflicted with misery when you have just found happiness." Having said this, in great pain, the deer gave up its life. In an instant, Pandu was also immersed in grief.'

110

Vaishampayana said, 'After the deer's death, the king and his wives lamented grievously, as if they had lost a relative.

'Pandu said, "Even if born in righteous families, deluded by the net of desire, men confront calamity because of their deeds and when their intelligence is destroyed. I have heard that my own father was born from a man always devoted to dharma. But he died when he was still young, because he lived a life addicted to desire. Through the illustrious rishi Krishna Dvaipayana, self-controlled in speech, I was born in the field of that lustful king. Despite that, I have become evil-hearted and my lowly mind is spent on the evil chase of deer, deserted by the gods. I am tied down by a great vice and I will now seek salvation. Following the undecaying example set by my father, I will now follow a meritorious way of life. I will certainly tie myself to a life of extreme austerities. I will live alone, spending each day under a single tree.[284] I will shave off my head and become a hermit who begs for his food as he roams the earth. I will cover myself with dust and be without a home and without refuge. The foot of a tree will be my home. I will renounce everything that is loved or hated. I will neither grieve nor rejoice, and praise and blame will be the same to me. I will not seek homage or

greetings. I will be at peace and without possessions. I will not mock anyone, nor will I furrow my brow at anyone. With a smiling face, I will always devote myself to the welfare of all creatures. I will never transgress the four orders, movable and immovable, and will treat them all equally, like my own children. Once every day, I will beg my food from two or five families and sustain myself. If it is impossible to obtain food in this way, I will fast. I will eat only a little and will never be greedy. I will never beg for more and never include more than seven.[285] I will think of the cutting off of one arm with an axe and the covering of the other with sandalwood the same way. I will not think of one as good and the other as evil, since both are equal. I will not act so as to live, nor act so as to die. Life and death are the same and I will not welcome one and hate the other. I will give up all the rituals for prosperity that those who are alive indulge in and times for their observance. I will always give up everything that makes the senses work. I will cleanse myself of all sin and even give up that done in the name of dharma. I will be free from all sin and all traps. I will not be under anyone's powers, but will follow the dharma of being as free as the wind. I will always sustain myself in this way and no other. I will make my body walk the path of fearlessness and not deviate. I will not follow the miserable path of dogs, followed by those without virility. I will follow my own righteous dharma and tread the lovely path of not using one's virility. He who is honoured and dishonoured and lusts for another life with hungry eyes, becomes full of desire and treads the path of dogs." When he had uttered these words, the king sorrowfully sighed.

'He looked at Kunti and Madri and said, "Tell Kousalya, *kshatta*[286] Vidura, the king and all his relatives, the lady Satyavati, Bhishma, the royal priests, great-souled soma-drinking and rigid-vowed Brahmanas and old citizens who live here under my protection that Pandu will leave for the forest." Hearing these words of their husband, who had made up his mind on leaving for the forest, both Kunti and Madri addressed him in these words. "O bull of the Bharata lineage! We are your wives under dharma. There are other stages of life[287] that you can observe with us and still perform great austerities. There is no doubt that even then, you will attain heaven. We will also control our senses, devote ourselves to our husband's world, give up all happiness and desire and perform great austerities. O lord of the earth! O immensely wise one! If you forsake us, there is no doubt that we will give up our lives today." Pandu replied, "If this decision of yours is in conformity with dharma, I will follow the undecaying path shown by my father with both of you. I will give up the pleasant life of villages and perform great austerities. I will eat roots and fruit, wear the bark of trees and roam in the great forest. I will bathe in the morning and evening and make offerings to the fire. I will make my body thin by eating less. I will wear skins and my hair will be matted. I will expose myself to hot and cold winds, hunger, thirst and exhaustion. Through difficult austerities, I will reduce my body. I will seek solitude and live on fruits, be they ripe or

unripe. I will worship the ancestors and the gods with food found in the forest, water and words. The sight of a man living for vanaprastha has never affected superior residents. How can it affect those who are inferior?[288] Until my body perishes, I will perform the severest penances laid down in the sacred texts for those who live in forests." Having said this to his wives, the king, a descendant of the Kuru lineage, gave the jewel from his crown, necklace, earrings, bracelets and valuable garments and ornaments belonging to his wives to the Brahmanas.

'Pandu then again said, "Go to Nagapura[289] and say that Pandu has left for the forest. He has given up riches, desire, happiness and the supreme joy of sex. The descendant of the Kuru lineage has left with his wives." Hearing these words of the lion of the Bharata lineage, the servants and attendants sorrowed and lamented. They bewailed in loud and pitiable voices. They shed hot tears and took their leave of the lord of the earth. Then they left for Hastinapura with his message. On hearing the details of all that had happened in the great forest, Dhritarashtra, best among kings, mourned for Pandu.

'Living on roots and fruit, the Kourava prince Pandu went with his wives to the mountain named Nagasabha. He went to Chaitraratha and crossed the Varishena. Then he crossed the Himalayas and went to Gandhamadana. Protected by the great beings,[290] the siddhas and the supreme rishis, the king lived for some time on the mountains and for some time on the plains. He then went to the lake Indradyumna and crossed Hansakuta. Then the ascetic king arrived at Shatashringa.'[291]

111

Vaishampayana said, 'There the valorous one engaged in the best of austerities and soon became a favourite of the siddhas and the charanas. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! He was devoted to service, had no ego, was disciplined and was in control of his senses. Through his own power, he went to heaven. To some, he was a brother. To some others, he was a friend. Other rishis protected him like a son. O bull among the Bharata lineage! After a long time, Pandu attained such great heights of pure austerity that he became a brahmarshi. With his wives, he wished to cross the Shatashringa and reach heaven. With his wives, he was about to start on a northward direction.

'The ascetics told him, "As we went northwards, climbing the king of the mountains, we have seen inaccessible regions on the mountain, the playgrounds of the gods, gandharvas and apsaras, Kubera's garden, laid out on plain and uneven ground, the sloping banks of great rivers and impenetrable caverns in mountains. There are regions that are always covered with snow and without trees, animals and birds. Some large tracts are inaccessible. No bird can cross them, not to speak of animals. The only thing that can go there is air, siddhas and supreme rishis. O bull among the Bharata lineage!

How can these princesses cross that king of the mountains? Do not make them sink in that misery and do not go there." Pandu replied, "O illustrious ones! It is said that one without a son has no door to heaven. I have no son and I tell you that I am in great sorrow. According to dharma, men are born on this earth with four debts—to ancestors, gods, rishis and men. The man who does not discharge them at the right time has no worlds. This has been established by those who know dharma. The gods are pleased through sacrifices, the sages through studying and austerities, the ancestors through sons and shraddhas and men through kindness. According to dharma, I have discharged my debts towards rishis, gods and other men. O ones blessed with the power of austerities! I have not yet been freed from the debt towards my ancestors and I am troubled. It is certain that when my body perishes, so will the ancestors. The best of men are born so as to give birth to offspring. I was begotten by the great-souled one[292] in my father's field. Like that, should I have offspring in my father's field?" The ascetics replied, "O king! O one who is devoted to dharma! We know that there are offspring for you, learned, beautiful, unblemished, and like the gods themselves. We have seen this through our divine sight. O tiger among men! Through your acts, accomplish what the gods have destined for you. The thinking and intelligent man always obtains fruit that are not spoilt. O son! The fruit can be seen. Exert yourself. When you have obtained offspring with all the qualities, you will find happiness." Having heard these words of the ascetics, Pandu was worried. He remembered that his own procreative powers had been lost thanks to the deer's curse.

'He told the famous Kunti, his lawful wife, "A union to obtain offspring is supported. O Kunti! The sacred texts say that the worlds are established by offspring. The learned ones who know eternal dharma say this. Offerings, gifts, austerities, self-control—it is said that none of these free a childless man from his sins. O one with the sweet smiles! Knowing this, since I am without offspring, I think and can see that I will never attain the bright worlds. O timid one! Since I was addicted to cruelty and viciousness, through the deer's curse, I lost my powers of procreation before my desire was satisfied. O Pritha! The religious texts speak of six kinds of sons who are both heirs and relatives and six kinds of sons who are neither heirs, nor relatives. Listen—the son born from one's own self, the son presented, the son purchased, the son born from one's widow, the son born through one's wife before marriage and the son born through a loose wife.[293] The others are the son gifted, the son bought, the son who is obtained artificially, the son who comes on his own, the son who comes with marriage, the son who is born of unknown semen and the son who is born from an inferior womb.[294] One should try to obtain sons from the first downwards and so on. One always desires to obtain a son from a better man. O Pritha! The self-created Manu has said that the righteous who have no offspring can ensure the fruits of dharma outside their own semen. O famous one! Since I am myself incapable of procreation, I will ask you to

obtain sons through my equals or betters. O Kunti! Listen to the story of Sharadandayani, the wife of a warrior. She was instructed by her superiors to obtain a son. O Kunti! When her season came, she bathed. In the night, she went to a place where four roads met and welcomed an accomplished Brahmana. For the sake of obtaining a son, she poured oblations into the fire. After performing this rite, she lived with him and three maharatha sons were thus born, Durjaya being the eldest. O fortunate one! On my instructions, you should also quickly obtain a son through a Brahmana who is superior to me in austerities."'

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Vaishampayana said, 'O king! Having been thus addressed, Kunti told Pandu, bull among the Kurus, lord of the earth and her husband, "O one who is learned in the law! O one with eyes like those of a blue lotus! You should not speak in this way to me. I am your wife under the law and am always devoted to you. O mighty-armed one! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! According to dharma, you should yourself father valourous sons on me. O tiger among men! I will go to heaven with you. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! You should unite with me to obtain offspring. Not even in my thoughts will I go to any other man but you. Which man on earth is superior to you? O one with large eyes! O one with dharma in your heart! Listen to this story from the Puranas. I heard this and I am now recounting it for you."

'Kunti said, "In ancient times, it is said that there was a king by the name of Vyushitashva. He extended the Puru lineage and was extremely righteous. The gods with Indra and the devarshis came to a sacrifice that this mighty-armed and righteous one performed. At the sacrifice of the great-souled rajarshi Vyushitashva, Indra was intoxicated with soma juice and the Brahmanas with their fees. O king! Thereafter, Vyushitashva was radiant beyond everything on earth, beyond all living beings and even beyond the sun, after dew has fallen. O supreme among kings! The king conquered all the kings of the east, the north, the middle and the south. At this great horse sacrifice, the powerful Vyushitashva, with the strength of ten elephants, became the king of all other kings. Those who know the Puranas sing a verse. 'Vyushitashva has conquered the entire earth till the boundaries of the ocean. He protects all the varnas, just as a father protects his own sons.' He performed many great sacrifices and gave riches to the Brahmanas. Collecting jewels, he later performed great sacrifices. Extracting a lot of soma juice, he performed the sacrifice known as *somasanstha*.

'"O lord of men! His beloved wife was named Bhadra, the daughter of Kakshivat. Because of her beauty, she was unparalleled on earth. It has been heard that they desired each other a lot and addicted by desire for her, he became a victim of consumption. After some time, he went away like the setting sun. When that king of men died, his wife was afflicted with grief. O tiger among men! O lord of men! It has

been heard that she lamented. 'O, supreme among those who know dharma! A woman without sons lives a life of misery, if she lives without her husband. O bull among the Kshatriyas! Without her husband, it is better for a woman to be dead. Please take me with you. I wish to go where you are going. Without you, I will not be able to bear life for an instant. O king! Show your grace to me and take me quickly away. O king! I will always follow you like a faithful shadow and will always be obedient towards you. O tiger among men! I will always do that which is pleasurable for you. O king! O one with the eyes of a lotus! From now, a disease that dries up the heart will overcome me, since I will be separated from you. O king! I am unfortunate. In earlier bodies, I must have separated companions or separated a couple that was united. O king! That evil act from an earlier body has now come upon me and I am suffering this pain as a result. O king! From today, I will lie on a bed of kusha grass. I will give up all happiness and think only of seeing you. O tiger among men! Show yourself to me and make me happy. O lord of men! I am overcome with grief, miserable, unprotected and lamenting.' Embracing the corpse, she lamented again and again. Then an invisible voice addressed her. 'O Bhadra! O sweet-smiling one! Arise and leave. I will give you a boon. I will father offspring on you. O one with the beautiful hips! After you have bathed after your season, on the eighth or fourteenth lunar day, I will lie with you on your own bed.' At these words, Queen Bhadra, who was devoted to her husband and wished to obtain sons, did as she had been asked to do. O lord of men! O supreme among those of the Bharata lineage! The queen gave birth to sons through the corpse—the three Shalvas and the four Madras. O bull of the Bharata lineage! You too will be able to have sons on me, through the powers of yoga your mind possesses."'

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Vaishampayana said, 'Having been thus addressed, the king who knew dharma and was always devoted to dharma, addressed the queen again in these supreme words. "O Kunti! O fortunate one! What you have said is true. In ancient times, Vyushitashva did act this way. But he was like a god. Let me tell you what the ancient and great-souled rishis, learned in dharma, have laid down as dharma. O one with the beautiful eyes! In ancient times, women went around uncovered. They roamed around where they wished and were independent. O one with the beautiful hips! O fortunate one! From the time when they became maidens, they were not faithful to their husbands. This was not regarded as against dharma, because that was the dharma of those ancient times. Without desire and anger, this ancient dharma is still followed by those of inferior birth.[295] The practice of this ancient dharma is sanctioned by the maharshis. O one with thighs like that of a plantain tree! This is still practised in the northern Kuru region. This eternal dharma is favourable to women. O one with the beautiful smiles! The present practice of the world was only laid down later. Listen when I tell you completely when

it was established and by whom."

'Pandu said, "We have heard that there was a maharshi named Uddalaka. He had a hermit son named Shvetaketu. We have heard that he laid down this rule for humans, in a fit of anger. O one with eyes like lotus petals! I will tell you why. In ancient times, in the presence of Shvetaketu's father, a Brahmana came and grasped his mother's hand and said, 'Let us go.' At this, the rishi's son was angry and indignant when he saw his mother being taken away, as if forcibly. On seeing him angry, Shvetaketu's father said, 'O son! Do not be angry. This is the eternal practice. Women of all varnas are uncovered on earth. All beings are established in their own varnas, like cattle.' Shvetaketu, the rishi's son, did not accept this dharma. He established the present rule for men and women on earth. O immensely fortunate one! This is for humans, not for animals. We have heard that since then this rule has been established. 'From that day onwards, a woman who is not faithful to her husband will commit a sin that is equal to that of foeticide and be miserable. He who seduces a virgin, one who follows brahmacharya, or a wife who is devoted to her husband will also commit a sin on earth. A wife who is appointed by her husband to conceive a son, but refuses to do so, will also commit the same sin. O, timid one! In ancient times, thus did Uddalaka's son Shvetaketu forcibly establish the present practice of dharma. O one with thighs like that of a plantain tree! We have also heard that Sudasa's son appointed his wife Madayanti to obtain a son and she went to the rishi Vashishtha. O beautiful one! Through him, she obtained a son named Ashmaka. Kalmashapada's[296] wife did this act so as to please her husband. O lotus-eyed one! You are acquainted with the story of our birth. O timid one! We were begotten through Krishna Dvaipayana, so that the lineage of the Kurus might be extended. O unblemished one! On seeing all these reasons, you must do what I am asking you to do and this is dharma. O princess! Those who are learned in dharma say that at the time of her season, a wife who is strict in her vows must seek her husband. This is dharma. However, at other times, the woman is free to choose. Righteous ones who know dharma say that this was the ancient practice. O princess! But those who know dharma have also said that it is the duty of a wife to do what her husband instructs, be it in favour of dharma or against dharma. O one with an unblemished form! This is especially the case if one is hungry for sons, but is unable to procreate on one's own. I am like that, longing to set my eyes on a son. O beautiful one! I am joining my hands, like lotus leaves with red fingers, and raising them above my head. Be propitiated. O one with the beautiful hair! Because of my instructions, give birth to sons who have all the qualities, through Brahmanas who are ascetics. O one with broad hips! Through your act, I will tread the path of those who have sons."'

Vaishampayana said, 'Pandu, the conqueror of enemy cities, thus addressed Kunti, the one with the beautiful hips. She loved to please her husband and said, "When I was a child in my father's house, I was appointed to look after the guests. There I satisfied,

with all attentiveness, a fearsome Brahmana rigid in his vows. He had his senses under control and was learned about the secret nuances of dharma. He is known as Durvasa. Pleased with my service, the illustrious one gave me a boon and taught me a mantra. Any god that I summon through this mantra will come to me and be subservient to me, whether he desires it or not. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! This is what he told me in my father's house. O king! The words uttered by a Brahmana are never false and the time has come. If you permit, I can summon a god. O rajarshi! O lord! Through that mantra, we can have offspring. O supreme among those who know the truth! Which god shall I summon? Know that I am waiting for your command, so as to act." Pandu replied, "O beautiful one! O one with the beautiful hips! You must act today itself, in the proper way. Summon Dharma, because he is the one who partakes of what is sacred. That which is not dharma is never united with that which is dharma. O one with the beautiful hips! The worlds will now think that what we have done is dharma. There is no doubt that one who is devoted to dharma will be born into the Kuru lineage. Since he will be given by Dharma, there will never be anything that is not dharma in his mind. O sweet-smiling one! Therefore, always set dharma before you and summon him. Worship Dharma through your offerings and rituals." At these words of her husband, the most beautiful of woman agreed. With his permission, she circumambulated him.'

114

Vaishampayana said, 'O Janamejaya! Kunti summoned the undecaying Dharma for conception, after Gandhari had been with child for a year. The queen swiftly made offerings to Dharma and followed the rites that had earlier been given to her by Durvasa. Through his powers of yoga, Dharma assumed form and she united with him. Consequently, the one with the beautiful hips obtained a son who was the best of all living beings. This was a sacred tithi,[297] widely worshipped. It was the eighth hour of the day and the sun was in the middle of the sky. It was the auspicious moment known as *aindra*, when the moon was in conjunction with Abhijit.[298] When it was time, Kunti gave birth to a famous son. As soon as he was born, an invisible voice was heard. "There is no doubt that he will be supreme among those who uphold dharma. Pandu's first-born son will be famous by the name of Yudhishthira. He will also be a famous king, renowned in the three worlds—endowed with fame, radiance and adherence to vows." Having obtained this virtuous son, Pandu again said, "It is said that the best thing for Kshatriyas is strength. Therefore, ask for a son who has great strength." Having been thus addressed by her husband, she invoked Vayu[299] for a son. Through him, she obtained the mighty-armed Bhima, whose strength was terrifying. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! As soon as this immensely strong one was born, an invisible voice was heard. "This son will be the strongest among all those who are strong." An extraordinary

event occurred as soon as Vrikodara[300] was born. Falling down from his mother's lap, he shattered a mountain into fragments with his body. Kunti was asleep and suddenly awoke, frightened by a tiger and forgetting that Vrikodara was asleep in her lap. The son, whose body was as hard as vajra, fell on the mountain. As he fell, he shattered the mountain into a hundred pieces with his body. On witnessing the mountain break in this way, Pandu was astounded. O supreme among those of the Bharata lineage! O lord of the earth! Duryodhana was born on the very same day that Bhima was born.

'When Vrikodara was born, Pandu again began to think. "How can I obtain a supreme son who will be the best in all the worlds? This world depends on destiny and on human action. But as decreed, destiny is only obtained over a period of time. We have heard that Indra is the king and the best of the gods. He has immeasurable strength and endeavour and he is valorous and unlimited in radiance. By pleasing him with austerities, I can obtain a son who is immensely strong. The son that he will give me will be the best. I shall therefore perform the greatest of austerities in mind, deeds and speech." Thereupon, after consulting with maharshis, the immensely energetic Pandu of the Kuru lineage instructed Kunti to observe a sacred vow for one year. The mighty-armed himself stood on one leg for a year, performing severe austerities and immersed in supreme meditation. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Wishing to propitiate the god who is the lord of the thirty gods, the one with dharma in his heart worshipped the sun. Indra responded after a long time. "I will give you a son who will be famous in the three worlds. He will ensure the welfare of gods, Brahmanas and relatives. I will give you a son who will destroy all his enemies." After the great-souled Vasava[301] had spoken to the king of the Kuru lineage, the one with dharma in his heart spoke to Kunti, remembering the words of the king of the gods. "O one with the beautiful hips! O sweet-smiling one! Devoted to morality, great-souled, radiant as the sun, invincible, action-oriented, extremely wonderful to look at and endowed with Kshatriya energy—this is the son we will receive through the grace of the king of the gods. Summon him." At these words, the famous one summoned Shakra.[302]

'The lord of the gods arrived and Arjuna was born from him. As soon as the son was born, an invisible voice was heard in the sky, with a thundering and deep roar. "O Kunti! He will be like Kartavirya and Shibi in prowess, invincible like Indra. He will spread your fame everywhere. As Vishnu increased Aditi's happiness, like Vishnu, Arjuna will increase your happiness. He will bring under his sway the countries of Madra, Kuru, Kekaya, Chedi, Kashi and Karusha and establish the prosperity of the Kurus. Through the valour of his arms, Havyavahana[303] will be supremely satisfied with the fat of all beings in Khandava. With his brothers, this immensely strong warrior will vanquish all small chiefs and perform three sacrifices. O Kunti! In valour, he will be the equal of Vishnu and Jamadagni's son Rama.[304] He will be the greatest among those endowed

with valour and he will be invincible. He will acquire all kinds of divine weapons. He will be a bull among men and he will regain the lost fortune." When Kunti was in her delivery room, these were the wonderful words that were heard from the sky and Kunti heard them. The ascetics who lived on Shatashringa also heard these loud words and were supremely delighted. The devarshis, Indra and the other gods and the sound of drums being played raised an enormous clamour in the sky. Amidst this thunderous roar, the entire place was covered with a shower of flowers.

'All the classes of gods assembled to pay their respects to Partha[305]—the offspring of Kadru and Vinata, the gandharvas, the apsaras, the lords of all beings and all the seven maharshis, Bharadvaja, Kashyapa, Goutama, Vishvamitra, Jamadagni, Vashishtha and the illustrious Atri, who arose when the sun was destroyed. Marichi, Angira, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Prajapati and all the gandharvas and apsaras also came. Wearing divine garlands and garments, adorned in every ornament, the apsaras danced and sang Bibhatsu's[306] praise. With the handsome Tumburu, the other gandharvas began to sing—Bhimasena, Ugrasena, Urnayu, Anagha, Gopati, Dhritarashtra, Suryavarcha, Yugapa, Trinapa, Karshni, Nandi, Chitraratha, Shalishira, Parjanya, Kali and Narada, the sixteenth one; and Sat, Brihat, Brihaka, the immensely famous Karala, Brahmachari, Bahuguna, the famous Suparna, Vishvavasu, Bhumanyu, Suchandra the tenth and the famous Haha and Huhu, whose songs are sweet. O bull among men! These were the divine gandharvas who sang. The apsaras were delighted and were adorned in every ornament. Those illustrious long-eyed ones danced—Anuna, Anavadya, Priyamukhya, Gunavara, Adrika, Shachi, Mishrakeshi, Alambusha, Marichi, Shuchika, Lakshana, Kshema, Devi, Rambha, Manorama, Asita, Subahu, Supriya, Suvapu, Pundarika, Sugandha, Suratha, Pramathini, Kamya and Sharadvati. All of them danced in groups. Menaka, Sahajanya, Parnika, Punjikasthala, Kratusthala, Ghritachi, Vishvachi, Purvachitti, the one who is famous as Umlocha and Pramlocha—these ten and Urvashi as the eleventh were long-eyed apsaras who sang. The adityas, radiant like the flames of fire, were assembled in the sky to increase the glory of the great Pandava—Dhata, Aryama, Mitra, Varuna, Amsha, Bhaga, Indra, Vivasvat, Pusha, Tvashta, Parjanya and Vishnu. O lord of the earth. The illustrious rudras were there—Mrigavyadha, Sharva, the immensely famous Nirriti, Aja Ekapada, Ahirbudhnya, Pinaki the destroyer of enemies, Dahana, Ishvara, Kapali, Sthanu and the illustrious Bhaga. The Ashvins, the eight vasus, the immensely powerful maruts, the vishvadevas and the saddhyas were also assembled there. The serpents Karkotaka, Shesha and Vasuki, Kacchapa, Apakunda and the mighty serpent Takshaka were there, with great energy, great anger and great strength. Many other serpents also assembled there. There were also Vinata's sons—Tarkshya, Arishtanemi, Garuda, Asitadhvaja, Aruna and Aruni. When they saw this great wonder, the supreme hermits were astounded. Their affection towards Pandu's sons increased even more.

‘But the immensely famous Pandu was again greedy for more sons. He summoned the beautiful Kunti yet again. However, she said, “A fourth son has not been heard of, even in times of calamity. After that, a woman is called promiscuous. After the fifth, she is called a courtesan. You are learned in the ways of dharma. You are wise. Because of the desire for offspring, why are you transgressing the law and speaking as if you have lost your reason?”’

115

Vaishampayana said, ‘After Kunti’s sons were born and Dhritarashtra’s sons, the daughter of the king of Madra privately spoke to Pandu. “O scorcher of enemies! I am not distressed, even though you find no qualities in me. O unblemished one! Though I am superior,[307] I have always been regarded as inferior. O king! O descendant of the Kuru lineage! I have not grieved on learning that Gandhari has given birth to 100 sons. But I do have a great unhappiness. We are not equal in that neither of us has sons. However, it is my destiny that my husband has obtained sons through Kunti alone. If the princess Kunti can arrange it so that I too have sons, she will do me a favour and this will be for your welfare too. Since she is my co-wife, I find it awkward to speak to Kuntibhoja’s daughter. But if you are pleased with me, please ask her yourself.” Pandu replied, “O Madri! I have always thought about this matter in my own mind. But I hesitated to speak to you, because I didn’t know whether you would like it or not. Now that I know what you desire, I will act on it. I am certain that she will not refuse when I speak to her.” Thereupon, Pandu spoke to Kunti in private.

‘Pandu said, “O fortunate one! Please give me offspring for the lineage and the worlds. Do that which pleases me. Ensure that I, my ancestors and my successors always have funeral cakes. For the sake of giving me pleasure, you will have to perform a supreme act that brings welfare. Do this extremely difficult act for the sake of your fame. Even though Indra has obtained sovereignty, he still performs sacrifices, so that he can obtain fame. O beautiful one! There are Brahmanas who know the mantras and have obtained ascetic powers that are difficult to obtain. For the sake of fame, they too go to preceptors. All rajarshis and all Brahmanas who are blessed with the power of austerities perform the most difficult of deeds for the sake of fame. O unblemished one! Obtain supreme fame and save Madri with a boat. Bestow children on her.” Having been thus addressed, she spoke to Madri. “Think of some god once and through him you will certainly obtain a son who will be like him.” After thinking about this for some time, Madri thought about the two Ashvins in her mind. They came and she obtained twin sons—Nakula and Sahadeva. Their beauty was unmatched on earth.

‘When the twins were born, the invisible voice spoke again. “These beautiful, brave and righteous sons will have qualities that will surpass all men. They will be radiant in energy, handsome and prosperous.” O lord of the earth! The inhabitants of the

Shatashringa mountains performed the rites of birth and affectionately named them. The eldest of Kunti's sons was named Yudhishthira. The one in the middle was named Bhimasena. And the third one was named Arjuna. Affectionately, the Brahmanas named the first of Madri's sons Nakula. And the one born later was named Sahadeva. These supreme ones of the Kuru lineage were born one year apart.

'For Madri's sake, Pandu once again spoke to Kunti in private. But Pritha replied, "O king! I gave her the secret to be used once. But she obtained two and I was deceived. I am worried that she will get the better of me.[308] This is the evil way of women. Fool that I was, I did not know that by summoning two gods at one time, the fruits could also be doubled. Therefore, do not command me again. This is a boon that I ask from you." Thus, five sons were born to Pandu through the gods. They were immensely powerful, performed great deeds and extended the Kuru lineage. They bore all the auspicious marks and were as handsome as the moon. They were as proud as lions, their gait was as powerful as lions and they were great archers. Their necks were like those of lions, they were the lords of men and they grew up with the valour of the gods. They grew up in the sacred Himalaya Mountains. On seeing them grow, the maharshis who were assembled there were astounded. These five, and the other hundred, extended the Kuru lineage. They grew up in a short while, like lotuses in a pond.'

116

Vaishampayana said, 'Pandu saw his five handsome sons grow up in that great forest on the mountain, protected by the strength of his arms. One day, it was the season of spring, when the forests are in full bloom and all beings are drunk and maddened. The king was roaming through the forest with his wives. Pandu saw the forest, with trees like *palasha, tilaka, chuta,*[309]*champaka, paribhadraka* and many other trees that were laden with flowers and fruit. The ponds were beautiful with many different kinds of lotuses.

'On seeing this, his heart turned to thoughts of love. Like a god, he was wandering around happily. Madri followed him, clad in a beautiful and semi-transparent garment. On seeing her youth through that garment, desire stirred in him, like a dense forest fire. The king stared at the one with eyes like that of a blue lotus, like his own. He could not control his desire and desire overpowered him. In that private place, the king forcibly seized her. The queen struggled and resisted, to the best of her strength. But his heart was taken over by desire. He did not remember the curse. Following the dharma of intercourse, he forcibly entered Madri. Under the control of love, the descendant of the Kuru lineage acted so as to end his own life. He had no fear of the curse and penetrated his beloved forcibly. With desire in his heart, his intelligence was deluded by destiny itself. Since he was prey to his senses, his consciousness was destroyed. Pandu, the descendant of the Kuru lineage and supremely devoted to dharma, succumbed to the law

of time when united with his wife.

‘Embracing the senseless king in her arms, the miserable Madri began to repeatedly and loudly lament. Kunti and the Pandavas, who were her sons and Madri’s sons, all came to the place where the king was lying. O king! Madri called out to Kunti. “Come here alone and leave the children there.” Hearing these words, she asked the children to stay away. Coming closer, she screamed, “I am dead.” On seeing both Pandu and Madri lying on the ground, Kunti’s body was overcome with grief and she lamented miserably. “This hero always protected me by controlling himself.[310] You knew about the hermit’s curse. Why did you transgress it? O Madri! You should have protected this king. Instead, why did you tempt him in this lonely place? Knowing and thinking about the curse, he was always miserable. How did he find pleasure when he was alone with you? O daughter of Bahlika! You are more fortunate than I. You have seen the lord of the earth’s face when he was happy.” Madri replied, “It was I who got tempted. I tried to resist him repeatedly, but could not stay away. It was as if he was intent on making his destiny true.” Kunti said, “By law, I am the eldest of the two wives. The fruits of dharma accrue to me. O Madri! O beautiful one! Therefore, do not try to restrain me from what must be done. I will accompany my husband who has gone to the land of the dead. Arise and let him go. Take care of the children.” Madri replied, “I am still embracing my husband and have not let him escape. Nor has my desire yet been satisfied. O elder one! Please give me permission. The best of the Bharata lineage came to me for the sake of desire. With his desire unsatisfied, how can I let him go to Yama’s abode? O revered one! If I live, it is certain that I will not be able to treat your children and mine in the same way and that sin will touch me. O Kunti! But you will be able to bring up my children as your own. The king has gone to the land of the dead because of his desire for me. Therefore, my body should be burnt with the king’s body. O revered one! Do what is pleasurable to me and burn them together. Watch over the children and think kindly of me. I cannot think of anything else I need to say.” Having said this, the illustrious daughter of the king of Madra, wife by law to that bull among men, climbed onto the fire of that funeral pyre.’

117

Vaishampayana said, ‘The maharshis who were the equals of the gods performed Pandu’s last rites. Then the ascetics assembled and consulted each other. “For the welfare of the kingdom and the country, the great-souled great ascetic came here, to live among ascetics and practise austerities. King Pandu has gone to heaven and has left his sons, who have just been born, and his wife as a treasure we must look after.” Having consulted with each other, those who are engaged in the welfare of all beings decided to go to the city of Nagasahrya,[311] with Pandu’s sons in front of them. Those generous and accomplished ones decided on the journey, so as to give the Pandavas to Bhishma and

Dhritarashtra. As soon as they decided, the ascetics set out at that very moment, with Pandu's sons and wife and the two bodies.[312]

'Earlier, she had always been used to a life of comfort. Now, out of affection for her sons, she thought that the long road was actually short. Within a short time, she reached Kurujangala and the illustrious one came to the chief[313] gate of the city. The citizens of Nagapura[314] were astounded on learning that thousands of charanas and sages had come to their city. It was the moment of sunrise. After paying their respects to dharma, the inhabitants of the city and their wives came out to see the ascetics. Masses of women, Kshatriyas, vehicles and Brahmanas with their wives emerged, and large masses of Vaishyas and Shudras too. Their minds were all on dharma and there was no cause for disturbance. Shantanu's son Bhishma, Somadatta's son Bahlika, the rajarshi with the sight of wisdom,[315] the kshatta Vidura himself, and surrounded by maids, the queen Satyavati, the illustrious Kousalya and Gandhari, emerged through the royal gate. Dhritarashtra's 100 sons, with Duryodhana at the forefront, also came out, adorned in myriad ornaments. On seeing the masses of maharshis, the Kouravas and their priests bowed their heads in homage and sat down below them. The citizens of the town and the country also bowed their heads down to the ground and sat down below them. On seeing that the crowd was completely quiet, Bhishma offered the kingdom and the country to the maharshis.

'At this, with the concurrence of the other maharshis, the eldest maharshi, with matted hair and a deerskin as his garment, spoke: "King Pandu of the Kuru lineage gave up a life of desire and pleasure and left for Shatashringa. He lived the life of a brahmachari there. But to accomplish the purposes of the gods, this son Yudhishthira was born there from Dharma himself. Then that great-souled king was given another son named Bhima by Matarishva[316] and he is immensely powerful, best among those who are strong. Puruhuta[317] gave Kunti this son. Truth is his strength and his exploits will shadow those of all other great archers. These two sons of Madri are great archers and supreme among those of the Kuru lineage. They were born from the Ashvins and are tigers among men. The illustrious Pandu always lived a life of dharma in the forest and in this way he revived his ancestral lineage. As he witnessed the birth, growth and study of the Vedas of his sons, Pandu always derived great pleasure. He never deviated from the righteous path. Having left these sons, Pandu has departed for the land of the ancestors seventeen days ago. On seeing him on the funeral pyre and about to be consumed by the face of the fire, Madri entered the fire and gave up her own life. She has followed to the world of her husband. Now perform those rites that should be performed for them. These are the two bodies and here are the supreme sons. Let these scorchers of enemies and their mother be respectfully received with rites of welcome. After the performance of the funeral rites, let Pandu, the upholder of the Kuru lineage, extremely famous and

knowledgeable in all aspects of dharma, gain the right to ancestral offerings." Having thus addressed the Kurus, all the charanas, guhyakas, rishis and siddhas vanished in an instant before the eyes of the Kurus, like a city of the gandharvas, leading to great amazement.'

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'Dhritarashtra said, "O Vidura! Perform all the royal funeral rites for Pandu, that lion among kings, and also specially for Madri. For the sake of Pandu and Madri, give away animals, garments, jewels and all kinds of riches to any that ask for them and as much as they want. Perform her rites the way Kunti would. Let her body be covered well, so that the sun and the wind cannot see it. Let there be no lamentations for the unblemished Pandu. He was a king to be praised. And five brave sons have been born to him, like the sons of the gods."'

Vaishampayana said, 'O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Vidura, with Bhishma, did as he had been asked. He performed Pandu's funeral rites in an extremely pure spot. Without any waste of time, the royal priests left the city, carrying with them a fragrant and flaming fire for Pandu. He was laid on a bier and covered with the best of scents and garlands and covered from all sides with cloth. This bier was also adorned with garlands, garments and great riches. Advisers, relatives and friends arrived. The lion among men was placed on a supremely decorated hearse, to be drawn by men. With the well-covered Madri, the hearse was then pulled by men. A white umbrella was held above the hearse and whisks made of yak tails were waved. With every musical instrument being played, it was a majestic scene. At the time of Pandu's funeral ceremony, hundreds of men distributed jewels among the crowd. Large white and pale umbrellas and beautiful garments were brought for the Kourava. The sacrificial priests wore white and poured offerings into the blazing and strong fire that went ahead. Thousands of Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras followed the king, lamenting in grief: "O king! O protector! Where are you going, leaving us unprotected and immersing us in eternal grief?" Bhishma, Vidura and Pandu's sons wept.

'At last they came to a beautiful, sacred and wooded region on the banks of the Ganga. On the plain, Pandu's hearse, truthful lion among men whose deeds were untainted, and that of his wife were laid down. The bodies were then scented with all kinds of perfumes, sanctified with pure fragrances, consecrated with the best of oils and bathed. Water was sprinkled from a hundred golden pots. White sandalwood paste was smeared, mixed with black aloe and the juice of coconuts. They were then draped in white cotton garments. Dressed in these garments, that bull among men, tiger among men, seemed to be alive, as if sleeping on an expensive bed. When the other funeral rites were over, the sacrifical priests gave their consent. The ornamented bodies of the king and Madri were covered in ghee. Fragrances like sandalwood, *tunga*, *padmaka* and

many other scents were applied and a fire was lit. On seeing the two bodies in flames, Kousalya lamented in her son's name and fell down on the ground, unconscious. Seeing her fall down in this way, the citizens of the town and the country also wept in grief, out of the affection they bore for the king. Along with men, all the other beings also cried out, even those of inferior births. Shantanu's son Bhishma wept in great sorrow, as did the immensely wise Vidura. All the other Kurus were also extremely miserable and unhappy. Then Bhishma, Vidura, the king, the relatives and the women of the Kuru lineage offered the water. O king! When the water ceremony was over, all the ordinary people sorrowed and consoled the Pandavas, who were overcome with grief.

'O king! With their relatives, the Pandavas slept on the ground. The Brahmanas and the citizens also slept on the ground. The Pandavas and the city, young and old, grieved for twelve nights, unhappy and miserable.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'Later, the kshatta, the king, Bhishma and the relatives performed Pandu's shraddha, offering the immortal cake. The Kurus and the chief Brahmanas were offered a feast in their thousands. A large number of gems and the best of villages were given to the chief Brahmanas. When the period of uncleanliness was over, the Pandavas, bulls among the Bharata lineage, were taken by the citizens to the city of Varanasahrya.[318] All the citizens of the town and the country still lamented for that bull of the Bharata lineage, as if they had lost a relative. When the shraddha ceremony was over, Vyasa saw that the people were still immersed in grief. He spoke to his mother, who was also immersed in grief. "Happy times are over. Terrible times lie ahead. The earth has lost her youth and every day is more sinful than the preceding one. A terrible time is coming—full of many delusions, thick with many vices and with the rituals of dharma destroyed. Give everything up and go and live in a hermitage. You will not be able to witness the destruction of your sons and lineage." She agreed to this. She entered her daughter-in-law's quarters and said, "O Ambika! O fortunate one! I hear that as a result of the evil acts committed by your son, this Bharata lineage, along with all its relatives and grandsons, will be destroyed. I will take Kousalya,[319] who is still grieving from the death of her son, and leave for the forest. Come if you want." O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Ambika consented. Taking Bhishma's permission, Satyavati, the one who was rigid in her vows, went off to the forest with both her daughters-in-law. O supreme among those of the Bharata lineage! There the queens performed terrible austerities. O king! They gave up their bodies and went on their journey.

'After observing all the rites prescribed in the Vedas, the Pandavas then began to grow up in their father's house, enjoying a life of pleasure. When they played childish games in their father's house with Dhritarashtra's sons, they excelled over them—in

running fast, in hitting targets, in eating and in raising dust. Bhimasena defeated all of Dhritarashtra's sons. Playfully, he grabbed them by the hair above their ears. He caught them by the heads when they fought with the Pandavas. Alone and with the least effort, Vrikodara oppressed those 101 sons, who possessed great energy. The strongest of the strong would kick them with his feet. He would throw them down on the ground and break their thighs, heads and shoulders. When playing in the water, he would sometimes catch ten of them in his arms and hold them down in the water, letting them go only when they were about to drown. When they climbed a tree to gather fruit, Bhima would kick the tree with his feet and make it shake. Shaken by the force, the tree would whirl around and swiftly fall down on the ground with its fruit, frightening the princes. In fights, speed and martial exercises, the princes were never able to get the better of Vrikodara in any competition. Thus, in any competition, Dhritarashtra's sons began to hate Vrikodara, even though he bore no ill will towards them, since he was only a child.

'Bhimasena's great strength became well known. On learning this, Dhritarashtra's powerful son[320] revealed the evil side of his nature. He was wicked and inclined towards evil. Out of delusion and greed for riches, an evil thought occurred to him. "Kunti's son Vrikodara, the second of the Pandavas, is the best in strength. I must find some trick so as to kill him. Then I will overpower his younger brother and his elder brother Yudhishthira. I will tie them up and reign as the sovereign of the earth." Having made his mind up about this evil act, Duryodhana was always on the lookout for a chance to get at the great-souled Bhima.

'O descendant of the Bharata lineage! For the sake of water sports, he had a wonderful and large sports house constructed, with cotton and wool. It was full of every object of desire. It was at a place known as Pramanakoti and slightly above the waterline. When the games were over, they would dress themselves in fresh garments, wear ornaments and quickly eat. When day was over, the valorous Kuru princes would be exhausted from their games and would rest in that sports house. The powerful Bhima always prevailed over the other princes in water sports. But on one occasion, he was tired at there having been an excess of exercise. He wished to sleep in Pramanakoti and climbed up the bank and found a spot. He was clad in a white garment. He was tired and he was under the influence of drink. O king! The Pandava was tired and slept like one who was dead. Then Duryodhana quietly tied him up with thongs made of creepers. He rolled him down from the land into the swift and deep waters. Regaining his consciousness, Kounteya[321] tore apart all the bonds. Bhima, supreme among those who wield arms, arose from the water. On another occasion when Bhima was again sleeping, he[322] brought many snakes—sharp in teeth, immensely poisonous, angry and virulent. He made them bite him[323] in all the soft spots of his body. But even when they bit him in the soft spots, they could not bring him down. They could not penetrate his skin,

because the broad-chested one was too tough. When Bhima woke up, he killed all the snakes. He and his companions[324] became very careful from that time onwards. He also had poison mixed in Bhimasena's food. This was freshly made *kalakuta* poison, so virulent that it made the hair on the body stand up. On this occasion, the Vaishya's son[325] alerted Pritha's sons, so as to ensure their welfare. But though Vrikodara ate this, it had no effect on him. Though the poison was extremely virulent and was meant to kill Bhima, Bhima digested and tolerated it.

'Then Duryodhana, Karna and Subala's son Shakuni tried many other means to kill the Pandavas. However, the Pandavas, scorchers of their enemies, got to know about all of these. As advised by Vidura, they never revealed all this.'

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Janamejaya said, 'O, great Brahmana! Please tell me about Kripa. How was he born from a clump of reeds? How did he get his weapons?'[326]

Vaishampayana said, "Maharshi Goutama had a son named Sharadvat. O king! This son was so named because he was born armed with arrows.[327] O destroyer of enemies! His intelligence was not attracted to the study of the Vedas. Instead, his intelligence was more attracted to the study of Dhanur Veda.[328] Just as those who know the brahman acquire all their knowledge of the Vedas through austerities, he acquired all his weapons through austerities. Goutama's son worried the king of the gods because of his austerities and because of his expertise in Dhanur Veda. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! The lord of the gods summoned a daughter of the gods named Janapadi and told her, "Create impediments in his austerities." She went to Sharadvat's beautiful hermitage. The young woman began to tempt Goutama's son, who had a bow and arrows in his hand. The apsara was only clad in a single piece of cloth. On seeing her wandering around in the forest alone, with a form that was unparalleled in the worlds, Goutama's son's eyes became wide open. The bow and arrows slipped down from his hands onto the ground. On seeing her, his body went numb. But he still possessed his knowledge and the power of his austerities. The immensely wise one used his patience to resist temptation. O king! However, a sudden fever overcame him and though he did not notice it, his semen issued forth. The sage left the hermitage and the apsara. His semen fell on a clump of reeds and having fallen there, divided itself into two. From this, a pair of twins was born to Goutama's son Sharadvat.

'King Shantanu had gone on a hunt and one of his soldiers happened to notice the twins. He saw a bow and arrows around them and also a black deerskin. He therefore deduced that they were the sons of a Brahmana who was learned in DhanurVeda. He showed the twins and the arrows to the king. Out of compassion, the king adopted the twins. He took them home, saying that they were like his children. He performed the

usual rites and began to rear them. Goutama's son, who had left, became an expert in Dhanur Veda. Because the children had been reared out of compassion, the lord of the earth decided to name them accordingly.[329] Through the power of his austerities, Goutama's son got to know where they were, though no one knew the secret. He went there and told everything, including his lineage. He taught him[330] the four parts of Dhanur Veda[331] and the usage of many different kinds of weapons, including all the secrets associated with them. He soon became a great teacher. All the maharathas learnt Dhanur Veda from him. This included Dhritarashtra's sons, the immensely powerful Pandavas, the Vrishnis and other kings who assembled from many countries.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'Bhishma wanted his grandsons to do especially well and wished to instil discipline. He therefore asked around for a preceptor who would be learned in archery and would be valorous. A man of little intelligence, who wasn't illustrious, wasn't an expert in all weapons and didn't have divine prowess, would never have been able to discipline the immensely powerful Kurus.

'In ancient times, maharshi Bharadvaja was once getting ready to pour oblations into the fire. The rishi saw the apsara Ghritachi herself, bathing.[332] The wind blew her garment away. At that, his semen issued out and the wise one placed it in a vessel.[333] The wise Drona was then born from that pot. He studied all the Vedas and the Vedangas. The powerful Bharadvaja, supreme among those who know dharma, taught the knowledge of the agneya weapon to the illustrious Agniveshya. O supreme among those of the Bharata lineage! The sage who was born from the fire[334] gave knowledge of the great weapon agneya to Bharadvaja's son.

'Bharadvaja had a friend and he was a king named Prishata. A son named Drupada was born to him. Prishata's son, that bull among Kshatriyas, always used to go to Drona's hermitage to play and study with him. When Prishata died, Drupada became the king, a mighty-armed lord of men over northern Panchala. The illustrious Bharadvaja also ascended to heaven. Obeying the instructions of his father and driven by the desire to obtain a son, the immensely famous Drona took Sharadvat's daughter Kripi for a wife. This descendant of Goutama was always engaged in agnihotra, the pursuit of dharma and self-control. She obtained a son named Ashvatthama. As soon as he was born, he neighed like the horse Ucchaihshrava. On hearing this, an invisible voice said from the sky, "Since this boy neighed like a horse and his voice carried over a long distance, he will be known as Ashvatthama."[335] Bharadvaja's son was extremely pleased with his son. He continued to live there and became extremely skilled in Dhanur Veda.

‘The great-souled son[336] of Jamadagni was a conqueror of enemies. O king! He[337] heard that he was giving away all his wealth to Brahmanas. Bharadvaja’s son spoke to him when Rama[338] was already leaving for the forest. He said, “I have come in search of riches. Know that I am Drona, a bull among Brahmanas.” Rama replied, “O one blessed with the power of austerities! Nothing is left of the gold or other riches that I possessed. I have given it all away to Brahmanas. I have given to Kashyapa, the goddess earth, right up to the boundaries of the ocean, with all her settlements and garlands of cities. Now I only have this body with me, weapons and many precious weapons. O Drona! Tell me quickly what you want. I will give it to you.” Drona said, “O descendant of the Bhrigu lineage! Give me all your arms and weapons of destruction, especially the knowledge of releasing them and withdrawing them.” Agreeing to this, the descendant of the Bhrigu lineage gave him all his weapons, especially all the mysteries of Dhanur Veda. Having received this, that supreme among Brahmanas became accomplished in the use of weapons and happily went to see his beloved friend Drupada.’

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Vaishampayana said, ‘O king! Bharadvaja’s powerful son went to Prishata’s son and said, “Recognize me.” Drupada replied, “O Brahmana! Your wisdom is lacking and inferior, if you suddenly begin to address me as your friend. O one with a dull mind! No great king can ever be a friend with men like you. You have no prosperity, nor do you have riches. Time decays everything, including friendship. It is true that we were friends once, but that was based on a relationship of equality. No friendship can be found in the world that does not age; desire and anger both destroy it. Do not therefore talk about a friendship that has died out. O best of Brahmanas! Find a fresh friendship. I was friends with you because it served my purpose. The poor cannot be a friend to the rich. The fool cannot be a friend to the learned. The weak cannot a friend of the strong. Who wants an old friendship? Those of similar wealth and similar lineage can have marriages and friendship together, not one who is rich with one who is poor. One who is learned in the Vedas[339] cannot be a friend to one who is not learned. One with chariots cannot be a friend to one who has no chariots. A king cannot be a friend to one who is not a king. Who wants this old friendship?” Thus addressed by Drupada, Bharadvaja’s powerful son was full of wrath and reflected for a while. The wise one thought about a course of action for Panchala[340] and made his way to Gajasahrya[341], the chief city of the Kurus.

‘One day, all the Kuru princes came out of Gajasahrya together. The brave ones wandered around, playing with a wooden ball.[342] While they were playing, the ball fell into a well. With all their efforts, they couldn’t find a way to recover the ball. The valorous Drona saw that the princes were unsuccessful in their attempts. He laughed at them a little and then softly told them, “Shame on your Kshatriya prowess! Shame on

your knowledge of weapons! You have been born in the Bharata lineage and yet you cannot recover a ball. Here is a handful of reeds[343] that I have invested with the mantra of my weapons. Look at their power, unmatched by that of anything else. I will pierce the ball with one of these reeds and that reed with another one and that one with another. With the chain of reeds, I will bring the ball up into my hands." On seeing this, the eyes of the princes widened with wonder. They saw him pull up the ball and spoke to the one who had pulled the ball up. "O Brahmana! We pay homage to you. No one else has the knowledge to do that. Who are you? We wish to know your lineage. What can we do for you?" Drona replied, "Go to Bhishma and tell him of my appearance and qualities. He has great intelligence and will know what should be done." The princes agreed. They went to Bhishma, the grandfather, and told him exactly what the Brahmana had said and done. On hearing this from the princes, Bhishma immediately recognized Drona. He thought that this would be the right preceptor. He went to him in person and paid him the highest of respects. Bhishma, the greatest of those who wielded arms, then skilfully asked Drona about the reason why he had come there and he told him the entire reason.

'Drona said, "Desiring to learn the science of Dhanur Veda, I earlier went to maharshi Agniveshya. I lived there for a long time, as a humble brahmachari with matted hair, desiring to learn Dhanur Veda. The powerful Yajnasena, son of the king of Panchala, hardworking and dedicated, also studied with me under that teacher. There he became my friend and was always willing to do what brought me happiness. I also loved his company. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! We studied together from the time we were boys. He would come to me and do things that were pleasurable for me. O Bhishma! He used to say things that brought me pleasure: 'I am the favourite son of my great-souled father. O friend! When I am instated by the king of Panchala in the kingdom, it will be yours to enjoy. I swear truthfully on this. My pleasures, riches and happiness will all be yours.' This is the way he spoke to me then. Having become skilled in use of weapons, I set out in search of riches. When I heard that he had been instated, I remembered those words. Happily, I went to see my old friend in his kingdom. O lord! Remembering those words, I went to my old friend Drupada and told him, 'O tiger among men! Recognize me as your friend.' But he laughed at me, as if I was a person who was unimportant. He said, 'O Brahmana! Your wisdom is lacking and inferior. O Brahmana! Why have you suddenly come to me, claiming to be my friend? O one with a dull mind! No great king can ever be a friend with men like you. You have no prosperity, nor do you have riches. The poor cannot be a friend to the rich. The fool cannot be a friend to the learned. The weak cannot a friend of the strong. The king cannot be a friend to one who is not a king. Who wants an old friendship?' O Bhishma! I was flooded with anger at Drupada's words and I made my way to the land of the Kurus, in search of disciples who might have the right qualities."'

Vaishampayana said, 'Bhishma and Pandu's sons accepted him as a preceptor. O king! With all kinds of riches, he handed over his grandsons as disciples to Drona, in accordance with the prescribed manner. Delighted, that great archer accepted the Kouravas as his disciples. Having accepted them, Drona called all of them together and told them privately, when they were seated at his feet, "O unblemished ones! There is a special task in my heart. You must promise me that you will give it to me when you have become skilled in the use of arms." O lord! When they heard him, the Kouravas remained silent. But Arjuna, the scorcher of enemies, gave him a complete promise and he then inhaled the scent of Arjuna's forehead repeatedly, embracing him delightedly and shedding tears of joy.

'Then the valorous Drona taught Pandu's sons the use of many weapons, human and divine. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Other princes also came to Drona, supreme among Brahmanas, to learn the use of arms—the Vrishnis, the Andhakas, kings from many countries and Radheya,[344] the son of the suta. They made Drona their preceptor. The suta's son was envious of Partha and always competed with him. With Duryodhana's support, he showed his contempt for the Pandavas.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'Arjuna took a great deal of care in worshipping his preceptor and showed the greatest devotion in learning the art of weapons. He became a great favourite of Drona's. Drona summoned the cook and told him secretly, "Never give Arjuna any food when it is dark." One day, when Arjuna was eating, a wind arose and blew out the lamp and its light. Arjuna continued to eat in the dark, his hand moving to his mouth from force of habit. The Pandava then began to practise in the night. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Drona heard the twang of his bowstring and came to him and embraced him. He said, "I promise you that I will do my utmost to ensure that you are the best archer in this world and there is no one equal to you." Then Drona taught Arjuna the art of fighting from horses, elephants, chariots and on the ground. Drona taught the Pandava how to fight in narrow confines[345] with clubs, swords, spears, javelins and lances. On witnessing his skills, thousands of kings and princes assembled to learn the science of Dhanur Veda.

'O king! Ekalavya was the son of Hiranyadhanu, the king of the nishadas. He came to Drona. However, since he was the son of a nishada,[346] Drona, who was learned in dharma, thought about it and refused to accept him as a student of archery, out of consideration for the others. That conqueror of enemies touched Drona's feet with his head. He went to the forest and used clay to make Drona's image. He began to worship and treat this as his preceptor, devoting his mind to learning archery in accordance with the proper disciplines. As a consequence of his exceptional faith and supreme devotion, he acquired great dexterity in fixing an arrow to the string of the bow, aiming and then

releasing it. One day, with Drona's permission, all the Kurus and the Pandavas, conquerors of their enemies, went out on their chariots for a hunt. O king! A servant followed the Pandavas, carrying the required objects with him and he had a dog with him. They wandered around in the forest, their hearts set on what they wished to do. The dog also wandered off in the forest, got lost and came upon the nishada. On seeing the dark nishada in the forest, his body covered with dirt and clad in a dark deerskin, the dog began to bark. When it kept on barking, he displayed great dexterity. In one instant, he shot seven arrows into its mouth. The dog dashed back to the Pandavas, its mouth full of arrows. On seeing this, the brave Pandavas were extremely surprised. At this supreme and dextrous feat of shooting blind,[347] they praised the person who had done this, but were also ashamed of their own skills. O king! The Pandavas went out to search for the forest-dweller who had done this and found him, tirelessly shooting arrows. They did not know him and his appearance wasn't handsome. They asked him, "Who are you and whose son are you?" Ekalavya replied, "Know me to be the son of Hiranyadhanu, the king of the nishadas. I am Drona's student and I am trying to become skilled in Dhanur Veda." The Pandavas ascertained the details of everything that had happened.

'On return, they told Drona the entire story. O king! Kounteya Arjuna kept thinking about Ekalavya. He went to Drona and affectionately told him, "In your affection, you embraced me and told me that no pupil of yours would ever be my equal. How is it that you have another valorous pupil in this world, the son of the nishada king, who is better than everyone else?" Thereupon, Drona thought for a moment and arrived at a decision. He took Savyasachi[348] with him and went to the nishada. He found Ekalavya, his body covered with filth. His hair was matted and he was attired in rags. However, with a bow in his hand, he was ceaselessly shooting arrows. On seeing Drona approach, Ekalavya went up to him. He prostrated himself on the ground and touched his feet with his head. After worshipping Drona in the prescribed way, the nishada's son told him that he was his student and stood before him with joined hands. At this, Drona told Ekalavya, "If you are my student, give me my fee." On hearing this, Ekalavya happily asked, "O illustrious one! What can I give you? Command me. O you who know the brahman! There is nothing that cannot be given to the preceptor." Drona said, "Give me your right thumb as a fee." On hearing Drona's terrible words, Ekalavya kept his promise. Always devoted to the truth, he cheerfully cut off his own right thumb, with happiness on his face and peace in his heart, and gave it to Drona. O lord of men! After that, when he pulled the bowstring with his other fingers, the nishada found that he was no longer as swift as earlier. Arjuna was pleased and his fever went away. Drona's words, that no one would be able to surpass Arjuna, came true.

'Among all the Kurus who were Drona's students, two became particularly skilled in fighting with clubs—Duryodhana and Bhima. Ashvatthama excelled in the use of all

secret weapons. The twins were better than all other men in the use of the sword. Yudhishthira was supreme in fighting with chariots. However, Dhananjaya[349] was the best in fighting with every weapon. The Pandava was famous on earth, right up to the frontiers of the ocean, for his intelligence, perseverance, strength and enterprise in all weapons. He was thus the foremost among all warriors. Arjuna was special, not just in his knowledge of weapons, but also in his devotion to his preceptor, though the instructions were the same for everyone. Alone among all the princes, Arjuna became an *atiratha*.[350] O lord of men! Dhritarashtra's evil-souled sons could not stand Bhimasena's great strength and Arjuna's great skill and hated them.

'O bull among men! When they became skilled in all knowledge, in a desire to examine their skill with weapons, Drona assembled them together. He got an artisan to construct an artificial bird and placed it on top of a tree. The princes could hardly see it and it was to be used as a target. Drona said, "Quickly pick up your bows, all of you. Fix arrows to the string of the bow, stand here and aim at that bird in the tree. O sons! When I give you permission, one after another, slice off the bird's head." The greatest of Angirasa's descendants first addressed Yudhishthira. "O invincible one! Aim with your arrow and let it go, as soon as I have asked you to." Yudhishthira first picked up a bow that made a loud noise. Then, as instructed by his preceptor, he stood, aiming at the bird. The descendant of the Kuru lineage stood there, with his bow stretched. O, bull among the Kuru lineage! After a short time, Drona asked, "O prince! Can you see that bird on the top of the tree?" "I can see it," Yudhishthira replied to his preceptor. After some time, Drona again asked, "Can you see the tree? Can you see me? Can you see your brothers?" In reply to each question, Kounteya[351] answered, one after the other: "I can see the large tree. I can see you. I can see the bird." Drona was displeased at these words and reproachfully told him, "This is not for you. You will not be able to hit the target." Then the immensely illustrious one placed Duryodhana in the same position and Dhritarashtra's other sons, one after another, so as to test them. Bhima and the other students and the kings who had come from other countries were also asked. All of them said that they could see everything and were scolded.

'Smilingly, Drona then summoned Dhananjaya. "This target is for you to shoot down. Listen. As soon as I ask you to, you must shoot. O son! Stand here for a moment, with your bow taut." Thus addressed, Savyasachi drew his bow into a semicircle, aimed at the target and stood there, as his preceptor had instructed. After a while, Drona asked him in the same way. "O Arjuna! Do you see the bird seated there? Do you see the tree? Do you see me?" Arjuna replied, "I can only see the bird. I cannot see the tree. Nor can I see you." Pleased, the invincible Drona waited again for a moment. Then he again addressed the Pandava, bull among warriors. "If you can see the bird, describe it to me." Arjuna replied, "I can only see the bird's head. I cannot see its body." At Arjuna's words, Drona was delighted and his hair stood up. He told Partha, "Shoot," and he let the arrow

go. The Pandava sliced off the head of the bird on the tree with his sharp arrow and brought it down on the ground. When Phalguna[352] succeeded in this task, Drona embraced him and deduced that Drupada and his relatives had already been vanquished in battle.

'O bull among the Bharata lineage! A few days later, the best of those of the Angirasa lineage went with his students to the Ganga to bathe. When Drona entered the water, a powerful crocodile grabbed him by the thigh, as if sent by destiny itself. Though quite capable of saving himself, Drona told his students, "Kill the crocodile and quickly save me." Even before he had finished speaking, Bibhatsu[353] let loose five sharp arrows that killed the crocodile under the water. The others were still standing around, looking confused. On seeing the Pandava's swiftness in action, Drona was extremely pleased and decided that he was the best of his students. The crocodile was chopped into many pieces through Partha's arrows. It let go of the great-souled one's thigh and returned to the five elements. Bharadvaja's son told the great-souled maharatha, "O mighty-armed one! Receive this invincible and supreme weapon, named brahmashira, with the knowledge of releasing it and withdrawing it. You must never use it against human beings. If it is used against an enemy whose energy is inferior, it will burn up the entire universe. O son! It is said that there is nothing superior to this weapon in the three worlds. Therefore, preserve it carefully and listen to my words. O brave one! If a superhuman enemy ever fights with you, use this weapon to kill him in battle." With joined hands, Bibhatsu promised that he would do as he had been asked and received the supreme weapon. His preceptor again told him, "No man in the world will be a greater archer than you."'

# Section Eight

## Jatugriha-daha Parva

*This parva has 373 shlokas and fifteen chapters.*

*Chapter 124: 33 shlokas*
*Chapter 125: 32 shlokas*
*Chapter 126: 39 shlokas*
*Chapter 127: 24 shlokas*
*Chapter 128: 18 shlokas*
*Chapter 129: 18 shlokas*
*Chapter 130: 20 shlokas*
*Chapter 131: 18 shlokas*
*Chapter 132: 19 shlokas*
*Chapter 133: 30 shlokas*
*Chapter 134: 28 shlokas*
*Chapter 135: 21 shlokas*
*Chapter 136: 19 shlokas*
*Chapter 137: 23 shlokas*
*Chapter 138: 31 shlokas*

Jatu *is lac and* griha *is house. This parva is about the burning down of the house of lac.*

124

Vaishampayana said, 'O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On seeing that the sons of Dhritarashtra and Pandu had become masters in the use of arms, Drona spoke to King Dhritarashtra, lord of men, in the presence of Kripa, Somadatta, Bahlika, the wise son of Ganga,[1] Vyasa and Vidura, "O king! O supreme among the Kurus! The princes have now completed their learning. O king! With your permission, let them now display what they have learned." The great king replied with gladness in his heart, "O best of the Brahmanas! O Bharadvaja![2] You have accomplished a great task. You should yourself order me about how to arrange the display, the time and the place and about the rules to be followed. Today, I grieve for my blindness and envy men who possess eyesight. They will now be able to witness the prowess of my sons with weapons. O kshatta![3] O one who is devoted to dharma! Follow the instructions of this teacher and preceptor. I can't think of anything that will be more agreeable to me." Thereupon, Vidura excused himself from the king's presence and went out.

'The immensely wise son of Bharadvaja measured out a flat stretch of land that was devoid of trees and bushes, but had wells and springs. O king! On that plot of ground, on a day when the nakshatras were auspicious, that supreme of eloquent warriors made offerings and the reasons for that were announced in the city. A large arena was

constructed in accordance with the principles of the shastras, and equipped with diverse weapons. O bull among men! Artisans constructed a giant viewing stand for the king and another for the women. The citizens built many platforms. The wealthy ones constructed large and high palanquins.

'When the day arrived, the king, accompanied by his advisers, came with Bhishma and the foremost of preceptors, Kripa, leading the way. They arrived at the divine royal viewing stand, constructed out of gold leaf, decorated with lattices of pearl-work and adorned with lapis lazuli.[4] O king who conquers all! Gandhari, the immensely fortunate Kunti and other ladies of the royal household arrived, dressed in beautiful garments and with their attendants. They joyfully ascended the viewing stand, like goddesses ascending Mount Meru. Brahmanas, Kshatriyas and others of the four varnas hurriedly left the city and arrived there, wishing to witness the skills of the princes in the use of arms. With the sound of the music that was being played and the curiosity of the assembly, the crowd was like a giant ocean rippling with waves. Then the preceptor entered the arena with his son. He was dressed in white garments and wore a white sacred thread. His hair and beard were white. He wore a white garland and was anointed with white paste. It was as if the moon and Mars had entered a sky that was bereft of rain clouds. At the appropriate time, that supreme of warriors[5] rendered offerings and instructed Brahmanas who knew the rites to recite mantras. Once the auspicious and pleasant musical instruments were quiet, men entered the arena, carrying diverse weapons and equipment.

'Then the mighty bulls of the Bharata lineage[6] tightened their lower garments and entered, equipped with bows, quivers and finger protectors. With Yudhishthira leading the way, those princes, in order of their age, began to display great valour and wonderful skills in the use of weapons. Some[7] lowered their heads, concerned that arrows might fall on them. Other men who were not concerned looked on, in wonder and amazement. They pierced targets with arrows that had their names engraved on them. They rode fleet-footed horses skilfully. On witnessing the strength of the princes in the use of bows and arrows, they were amazed and thought they were in a city of the gandharvas. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Hundreds and thousands of men, their eyes dilated with wonder, cheered them on. After repeatedly demonstrating their skill in the use of bows and arrows, chariots, fighting on elephants, fighting on horses and duels, those strong ones then picked up swords and shields and began to circle one another on the ground, exhibiting the various modes of attacking with a sword. They saw the agility, beauty, symmetry, balance, firmness of grasp and mastery in use of sword and shield.

'Then, in great spirits, Suyodhana[8] and Vrikodara entered, with clubs in their hands, like two single-peaked mountains. Those mighty-armed warriors tightened their lower

garments and roared, like two mad elephants trumpeting and contending.[9] Those immensely strong ones circled each other with unblemished clubs, like mad elephants. Vidura described the feats of the princes to Dhritarashtra and the mother of the Pandavas[10] described them to Gandhari.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'When the Kuru prince[11] and Bhima, supreme among strong ones, descended into the arena, the spectators divided into two factions, each partial towards its own favourite. Some cried, "Look at the valorous Kuru prince." Others cried, "Look at the valorous Bhima." A great roar arose from the cheers of the spectators. On seeing that the place had become like a turbulent ocean, the wise son of Bharadvaja spoke to his beloved son Ashvatthama. Drona said, "Stop those two great warriors, both skilled. Let this crowd not become angered over Bhima and Duryodhana." Restrained by their preceptor's son, those two raised their clubs, like violent oceans lashed by tempests at the time of the world's destruction.

'Then Drona entered the arena and stopped the musical instruments in a voice that was as deep as the thunder of the clouds. "Now behold Partha, who is dearer to me than my own son. He is skilled in the use of all weapons. He is Indra's son himself and is like Indra's younger brother." With his entrance blessed by his preceptor, the youthful Phalguni[12] appeared. He wore a finger protector and arm guard,[13]his quiver was full of arrows and he had a bow in his hand. He wore golden armour and he looked like an evening cloud reflecting the rays of the setting sun, radiant as a rainbow with lightning flashes. At this, a loud roar of joy arose everywhere in the arena. Musical instruments and conch shells sounded. "This is the middle Pandava, Kunti's illustrious son." "This is the great Indra's son, the protector of the Kurus." "This is the supreme one among those who are skilled in the use of weapons." "This is the supreme one among those who tread the path of dharma." "This is the foremost one in good conduct." "This is the treasury in knowledge of good conduct." Hearing these loud and incomparable words from the spectators, Kunti's tears mingled with milk from her breasts and made them damp.

'Dhritarashtra's ears were filled with the great roar and that best of men happily asked Vidura, "O kshatta! What is this great uproar like the sound of a stormy sea, which suddenly arises in this arena and resonates in the sky?" Vidura replied, "O great king! Pandu and Pritha's son, Phalguni, clad in his armour, has entered. Hence, this uproar." Dhritarashtra said, "O one with great intelligence! I am indeed fortunate and favoured that I am protected by the flames of these three Pandavas, obtained from Pritha's kindling." When the arena had become somewhat quiet, Bibhatsu[14] began to exhibit the lightness in use of weapons he had learned from his preceptor.

'He created fire with an agneya weapon. He created water with a varuna weapon. He

created winds with a vayavya weapon. He created rain with a parjanya weapon. He entered the ground with a bhoumya weapon. He created mountains with a parvata weapon. He made everything disappear with an antardhana weapon. In an instant, he appeared tall, then short. In an instant, he was yoked to his chariot. In another, he was in the middle of his chariot. And in another instant, he was on the ground again. Trained well, the preceptor's favourite used various types of arrows to shoot various targets, some fragile, some fine and still others thick. When an iron boar was moved, he shot five continuous arrows into its mouth, as if they were but one arrow. A cow's hollow horn was swayed on a rope and the immensely valorous hero shot twenty-one arrows into it. In this way, he exhibited his great dexterity in the use of the sword, the bow, the club and other weapons.

'O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The tournament was almost over. The musical instruments were quiet. The spectators had thinned. At that time, there was heard at the gate the sound of arms being slapped, signalling power and strength, like the crash of thunder. "Are the mountains being splintered?" "Is the earth breaking up?" "Is the sky echoing with the roar of clouds filled with rain?" O ruler of the earth! The spectators in the arena thought in this way and turned their eyes towards the gate. Surrounded by the five brothers, Pritha's sons, Drona looked like the moon surrounded by five stars. With Ashvatthama, Duryodhana, the slayer of enemies, stood up quickly, surrounded by his 100 haughty brothers. He had a club in his hand and his 100 brothers circled him, with weapons raised, looking like Purandara[15] of ancient times, surrounded by the gods at the time of doing battle and destroying the danavas.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'The spectators, eyes wide with wonder, made way and Karna, the conqueror of enemy cities, entered the large arena. He was clad in his natural coat of armour. His face was radiant with his earrings. His bow was in his hand and his sword was tied.[16] He entered like a walking mountain. That destroyer of enemy armies was great in fame and wide of eyes. Karna was born from Pritha when she was a virgin, from a portion of the sun whose rays are sharp. His strength, valour and prowess were like that of a lion, a bull, or a king of elephants. In radiance, beauty and splendour, he was like the sun, the moon and the fire. He was tall, like a golden palm tree. He was a youth who could slay lions. Born from the sun, he was handsome and possessed countless qualities. The mighty-armed one looked all around the arena. Perfunctorily, he bowed to Drona and Kripa. Everyone in that assembly remained stationary and gazed at him steadfastly. They were filled with great curiosity and asked each other who he was.

'Supreme among those who are eloquent, the sun's son addressed his unrecognized brother, the son of Paka's punisher,[17] in a voice that was as deep as the roar of the clouds. "O Partha! Before the eyes of these people, I will perform feats that will surpass

everything that you have done. Don't be too amazed at what you have done." O supreme among those who are eloquent! No sooner had he uttered these words, than the spectators quickly stood up all at once, as if raised up by a single machine. O tiger among men! Duryodhana was greatly delighted. Bibhatsu was suddenly filled with anger and a sense of disgrace.

'With Drona's permission, Karna, always eager to do battle and immensely strong, exhibited all that Partha had displayed before. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Duryodhana and his brothers delightedly embraced Karna and said, "O mighty-armed hero! Welcome. Good fortune has brought you here. You know how to humble pride. I and the Kuru kingdom await your pleasure." Karna replied, "You have said it and that alone is enough. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! I only desire your friendship. And I desire to have a duel with Partha." Duryodhana replied, "O scourge of enemies! Enjoy all the pleasures with me. Do that which pleases your friends. Place your feet on the heads of all your enemies." At that, Partha considered that he had been insulted. He told Karna, who stood in the midst of the brothers like a mountain, "O Karna! When I have finished killing you, you will attain the worlds set aside for unwelcome intruders and uninvited speakers." Karna replied, "O Phalguni! This arena is meant for everyone and not for you alone. Dharma is that of strength and they are kings who are superior in valour. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Altercations are nothing but the resort of the weak. Why use it? Speak with arrows, until my arrow carries off your head in your preceptor's presence." Partha, the conqueror of enemy cities, was embraced by his brothers. With Drona's permission, he advanced to fight. Thereupon, Karna was embraced by Duryodhana and his brothers. He picked up his bow and arrows and stood ready for battle.

'The sky was covered with thundering clouds, with lightning flashes in them. Indra's radiant and coloured bow appeared.[18] The clouds seemed to laugh because of white cranes flying. Seeing that Harihaya[19] was fondly looking down on the arena, the sun dispersed clouds that were above his son. Phalguni was invisible under the shadow of the clouds. But Karna was clearly visible, because the sun had dispersed the clouds. Dhritarashtra's sons stood next to Karna. Bharadvaja's son,[20] Kripa and Bhishma stood next to Partha. The assembly was divided into two parties, including the women. Since she knew the truth, Kuntibhoja's daughter[21] fainted. Vidura, learned in all aspects of dharma, revived the unconscious Kunti by sprinkling water scented with sandalwood over her. When she revived, she was struck with grief at the sight of her two sons clad in armour. But there was nothing she could do.

'When the two were ready and had raised their bows, Sharadvata Kripa, well versed in all aspects of dharma and skilled in the rules of duels, said, "This son of Pandu is Kunti's youngest son. He is a Kuru and will fight a duel with you. O mighty-armed hero!

You should also tell us your mother, father and lineage and the royal dynasty of which you are the ornament. On knowing this, Partha will fight with you. Or he may not fight."[22] At these words, Karna's face was flushed with shame. It looked as if a lotus had been faded and torn by showers of rain. Duryodhana said, "O preceptor! It is stated in the sacred texts that there are three ways to become a king—through noble birth, through valour and through leading an army. If Phalguni is unwilling to fight with someone who is not a king, I install him[23] as king in the land of Anga." At that instant, the immensely powerful and fortunate maharatha Karna was instated in the kingdom of Anga, with roasted grains of rice, flowers, golden water pots and ritual chanting by those who knew the mantras. He was seated on a golden seat, an umbrella was held above him and whisks[24] were waved at his side.

'When the cries of "Victory" had died down, the bull among kings told the Kourava,[25] "What can I give you that is comparable to your gift of this kingdom? O king! O tiger among kings! Tell me and I will do your bidding." Suyodhana[26] replied, "I wish for your eternal friendship." Having been thus addressed, Karna said, "So shall it be." Thereupon, they embraced each other in joy and were immensely happy.'

127

Vaishampayana said, 'At that moment, Adhiratha entered the arena, swaying on his feet and supporting himself on a staff. He was trembling and perspiring and his upper garments were in disarray. On seeing him, Karna discarded his bow. Out of regard for his father, he bowed down his head, still wet with water from the coronation. The charioteer quickly covered his feet with the end of his garment and addressed Karna, who had been crowned with success, as his son. Trembling with affection, he kissed him on the head and wet with his tears the head that was already damp with water from the instatement as the king of Anga. When Pandava Bhimasena saw him, he deduced that he[27] was a charioteer's son and jeeringly said, "O son of a charioteer! You don't have the right to be killed by Partha in battle. You had better take up a whip, more befitting of your lineage. O worst of men! You have no right to enjoy the kingdom of Anga, just as a dog has no right to eat the cake that is offered at a sacrificial fire." At these words, Karna's lips quivered a little. He looked up at the sun in the sky and sighed.

'The immensely strong Duryodhana arose angrily from among his brothers, like a mad elephant arises from a pond of lotuses. He told Bhimasena, of the terrible deeds, who stood there, "O Vrikodara! You should not speak these words. Strength is the most important virtue of Kshatriyas and even the most inferior of Kshatriyas deserves to be fought with. The sources of warriors and rivers are both the same; they are always unknown. The fire that covers the entire world arises from water. The vajra that destroyed danavas was made from Dadhichi's bones. It is said that the birth of the

illustrious god Guha[28] is a complete mystery. Some say he is the son of Agni, or of the Krittikas,[29] or Rudra's son, or Ganga's. It is said that those who have been born Brahmanas have become Kshatriyas. Our preceptor was born in a water pot, Kripa in a clump of reeds. And we also know how all of you were born. Can a deer give birth to this tiger, equal to the sun, with natural armour and earrings and possessing all the auspicious marks? This lord of men deserves to be king, not only of Anga but of the entire world, through the valour of his arms and my obedience to him. If there is any man to whom my action seems condemnable, let him ascend his chariot, or on foot bend his bow." At this, a loud uproar arose in the arena, intermingled with cheers of applause. At that time, the sun went down.

'King Duryodhana grasped Karna's hand and led him out of the arena, lit with the flames of myriad torches. O lord of the earth! With Drona, Kripa and Bhishma, the Pandavas also returned to their own homes. Everyone went to their respective houses. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! As they went away, some hailed Arjuna, some Karna and some Duryodhana. Kunti was also delighted out of affection for her son, because she recognized him from the various auspicious marks on his body, and he had become the king of Anga. O king! Having obtained Karna, Duryodhana quickly banished his fears arising out of Arjuna's skills. Skilled in use of arms, that warrior[30] also gratified Suyodhana with sweet words. At that time, Yudhishthira also thought that there was no archer equal to Karna on earth.'

128

Vaishampayana said, 'O ruler of the earth! One day, Drona the preceptor assembled his pupils together and asked all of them for his fee.[31] "Capture Drupada, the king of Panchala, in a raid and bring him here to me. O fortunate ones! That will be my greatest dakshina." Agreeing, all of them armed themselves with weapons and quickly climbed into their chariots and set out, accompanied by Drona, in order to pay the preceptor's fee. Those bulls among men destroyed Panchala and went to the capital of the immensely powerful Drupada and attacked it. O bull of the Bharata lineage! Thus capturing Yajnasena Drupada and his advisers in battle, they brought him to Drona.

'Seeing him[32] humiliated and robbed of his riches and under his complete control, Drona remembered his earlier enmity with Drupada and said, "I have laid waste your kingdom and your capital. Now that you have received your life at an enemy's hand, do you wish to revive our old friendship?" Having said this, he smiled a little, arrived at a decision and continued, "O king! Do not fear for your life. We Brahmanas always forgive. O bull among the Kshatriyas! From the days when we were boys and played in the hermitage, my love and affection for you have increased. O bull among men! I ask for your friendship once again. O king! As a boon, I am granting you half of your

kingdom. O Yajnasena! How can one who is not a king be a friend to one who is a king? Therefore, I am retaining half of your kingdom. You will be the king of the region that is to the south of the Bhagirathi and I will be the king on the northern side. O Panchala! If you so desire, from now on, know me as your friend." Drupada replied, "O Brahmana! O great-souled and brave one! This is not surprising. I am pleased to be your friend and I wish to give you pleasure eternally." O descendant of the Bharata lineage! At these words, Drona set him free. He honoured him with a happy heart and returned half his kingdom.

'Heartbroken, Drupada lived in a capital named Kampilya, in the region known as Makandi, on the banks of the Ganga, with its towns and countryside. He ruled over the southern part of Panchala, up to the banks of the river Charmanvati. Thinking about his enmity with Drona, he could find no peace. He did not see any way of vanquishing Drona with Kshatriya power and he knew himself to be inferior to the strength of Brahmana power. Therefore, he bore his grievance, waiting for the birth of a son. O king! Drona lived in Ahichhatra, which had towns and a countryside, and was won in battle by Partha and handed over to him.'

129

Vaishampayana said, 'On seeing that Bhimasena had become extremely strong and Dhananjaya extremely skilled, the evil Duryodhana was tormented. Then, Vaikartana Karna and Subala's son, Shakuni, tried to kill the Pandavas through various means. However, the Pandavas, slayers of enemies, discovered all of them. But because of Vidura's advice, they refrained from revealing these plots.

'O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On seeing that the sons of Pandu were blessed with all the qualities, the citizens began to speak about their qualities in squares and assemblies. "Lord of men, Dhritarashtra, though possessing the sight of wisdom, could not inherit the kingdom then because he was blind. How can he be king now? Shantanu's son, Bhishma, is rigid in his vows and is devoted to the truth. Having given up the kingdom earlier, he will never accept it now. The eldest Pandava is young, but has the conduct of the old, is truthful and compassionate and has knowledge of the Vedas. With due ceremonies, it is up to us to crown him. Since he follows the path of dharma, he will certainly worship Shantanu's son Bhishma and Dhritarashtra and his sons and give them objects for sustenance." The evil Duryodhana heard these words of affection for Yudhisthira and burnt in grief. Burning thus, the evil-souled one could not condone such talk.

'Inflamed with jealousy, he went to Dhritarashtra. Finding his father alone, he paid homage to him, and burnt by the partiality of the citizens, said, "O father! I have heard words of ill omen uttered by the citizens. Ignoring you and Bhishma, they desire that the Pandava should be their king. Bhishma will agree to this, because he does not wish to

rule the kingdom. It seems that the citizens wish to impose a great injury on us. Earlier, Pandu obtained this kingdom from his father because of his own qualities. Though you possessed every quality required to inherit the kingdom, you did not get it because of your defect. If Pandu's son now receives it after Pandu, his son will certainly receive it thereafter and his son and so on. We and our sons will be excluded from the royal succession. O lord of the earth! In future, we will be ignored by the worlds. We will always be dependent on others for our rice cakes and will always live in hell. O king! Therefore, quickly find a way so that this does not happen. O king! If you had obtained the kingdom earlier, you would have become established and we would have certainly succeeded to it, regardless of how unwilling the people are."'

130

Vaishampayana said, 'Having heard these words from his son, Dhritarashta thought for a while and then spoke to his son. Dhritarashtra said, "Pandu was always devoted to dharma. He always behaved respectfully towards his relatives, and especially towards me. I never knew him to care for food and other objects of pleasure. He was rigid in his vows and gave me everything, including the kingdom. Pandu's son is as devoted to dharma as he was. He has all the qualities, is famous in the worlds and is extremely respected by the citizens. How can we forcibly exile him, especially since he has allies, from the kingdom of his father and grandfather? Pandu always took care of his advisers and his soldiers, especially their sons and grandsons. O son! Earlier, Pandu always took good care of the citizens of the city. For Yudhisthira's sake, why should they not kill us and our relatives?" Duryodhana replied, "O father! I have thought about that danger also and have weighed it against the evil that will befall us. We must placate the people by offering them wealth and honour. They will then certainly side with us. O lord of the earth! The advisers and the treasury are now under our control. Therefore, use some gentle means to remove the Pandavas to the city of Varanavata. O king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When I am firmly installed as king, Kunti and her sons can always return."

'Dhritarashtra said, "O Duryodhana! The same thought has arisen in my mind too. But I could not reveal it because it was evil. Bhishma or Drona or kshatta[33] or Goutama[34] will never approve the banishment of Kunti's sons. O son! In their eyes, we and the Pandavas are equals. Those wise and virtuous men will not tolerate any differentiation. O son! Why should we not deserve death[35] from the descendants of the Kuru lineage, those great-souled ones and even inhabitants of the entire world?"

'Duryodhana said, "Bhishma will always be neutral. Drona's son[36] is on my side. There is no doubt that Drona will be on the side that his son is on. There is no doubt that Sharadvat's son, Kripa, will be on the side where those three[37] can be. He will never

forsake Drona and his sister's son.[38] Though he secretly sides with others,[39] kshatta's survival is linked to us. Even if he opposes us for the sake of the Pandavas, he will be able to do no harm. Without any fear, banish Pandu's sons and their mother to Varanavata. Do it today and evil will not result. Through this act, take away the terrible spike that is in my heart and the fire that burns me with grief and robs me of my sleep."'

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Vaishampayana said, 'Then King Duryodhana and his brothers slowly began to win people over to their side by bestowing honour and riches on them. One day, on Dhritarashtra's instructions, some skilled ministers began to describe the beautiful city of Varanavata. "Pashupati's[40] festival will be held in the beautiful city of Varanavata. A large number of people have assembled there. That marvellous place will be adorned with all the gems." On Dhritarashtra's bidding, these were the words they uttered. O king! When they heard these stories about the beautiful city of Varanavata, Pandu's sons wished to go there.

'When the king realized that the Pandavas were curious, Ambika's son[41] told the Pandavas, "My men always and repeatedly describe to me the city of Varanavata, the most charming in the world. O sons! If you wish to witness the festival in the city of Varanavata, go there with your attendants and soldiers and enjoy yourselves like the gods. Give jewels to all the Brahmanas and the singers. Enjoy yourselves like radiant gods who possess all they desire. Spend as much time as you want there and when you have enjoyed yourselves completely, happily return to Hastinapura." Realizing that this was Dhritarashtra's own wish and he himself had no allies, Yudhisthira agreed.

'Addressing Shantanu's son, Bhishma, the immensely wise Vidura, Drona, the Bahlika Somadatta, the Kouravas, Kripa, the preceptor's son[42] and the illustrious Gandhari, Yudhisthira said, softly and meekly, "On Dhritarashtra's command, we are going with our friends to the lovely and populated city of Varanavata. Bless us with happy hearts, so that those sacred blessings ensure our prosperity and protect us from sin." Having heard these words of Pandu's son, all the Kouravas blessed the Pandavas with happy hearts. "O sons of Pandu! Let all the beings along your journey bring you fortune. Let not the slightest touch of evil touch you." Then, after having received blessings and after having performed all the rites for obtaining the kingdom, the Pandavas left for Varanavata.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'O descendant of the Bharata lineage! When the king[43] addressed Pandu's great-souled sons, the evil-hearted Duryodhana was extremely happy.

'O bull among the Bharatas! He privately summoned Purochana, grasped the adviser

by the right hand and told him these words. “O Purochana! This world, with all its riches, is mine. But with me, it is also yours. You should protect it. I have no other ally who is as trustworthy. I have to consult with you. O father![44] Keep these consultations[45] and destroy my enemies cleverly. Skilfully accomplish what I ask you to do. Dhritarashtra has sent the Pandavas to Varanavata. On Dhritarashtra’s command, they will sport themselves in the festival there. Ensure that you reach Varanavata today on a cart drawn by swift asses. On reaching there, build an excellent house with four halls on the outskirts of the city—large and full of riches and near the store where weapons are kept. Use hemp, resin and other inflammable materials that can be obtained in the construction. Mix the clay with ghee, oil from seeds and a large quantity of lac and plaster the walls with this. Also place carefully in the house hemp, cane, ghee, lac, wood and wooden tools, but in such a way that the Pandavas or other men are not suspicious on scrutiny and do not deduce that the house has been constructed with inflammable materials. After constructing the house in this way, reverently pay homage to the Pandavas and get them to live there, with Kunti and her attendants. For the sons of Pandu, place beautiful conveyances, seats and beds there, so as to satisfy my father. Do it in such a way that no one in the city of Varanavata gets to know, until our time arrives. Knowing that they are asleep in their beds, completely assured and without suspecting danger from anywhere, set fire to it, beginning at the gate. When they have burnt to death in that house, people will not blame us for the death of the Pandavas.” Purochana promised the Kourava[46] that he would do this and left for Varanavata in a cart drawn by asses.

‘O king! He was always obedient to Duryodhana and left quickly. Purochana did as the prince had asked him to.’

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Vaishampayana said, ‘The Pandavas yoked excellent horses, swift as the wind, to their chariots. When ascending, they sorrowfully touched the feet of Bhishma, King Dhritarashtra, the great-souled Drona, Kripa, Vidura and others who were old. Since they were rigid in their vows, they paid homage to all the elders of the Kuru lineage and embraced their equals. Even the children said farewell. Taking leave of all the mothers[47] and circling them with respect, they said farewell to the citizens and set out for Varanavata.

‘The immensely wise Vidura, other bulls among the Kurus and the citizens sorrowfully followed those tigers among men. O bull among the Bharatas! There were some fearless Brahmanas there. Aggrieved over what had happened to Pandu’s sons, they said, “The evil King Dhritarashtra isn’t impartial and is immersed in darkness. Dhritarashtra doesn’t follow the path of dharma. The Pandava who has no sin in his heart,[48] Bhima,

supreme among those who are strong, and Kunti's son, Dhananjaya, cannot commit a sin. Nor can the immensely wise sons of Madri. Dhritarashtra cannot bear that they have inherited the kingdom from their father. How could Bhishma have allowed such a great act of adharma, so that Kunti's sons, bulls of the Bharata lineage, have been banished to another city without reason? Vichitravirya, Shantanu's son and Kuru's descendant, and rajarshi Pandu were like our fathers. Since that tiger among men[49] has now met his destiny, Dhritarashtra cannot bear his sons, these princes, though they are young. We cannot sanction this. Therefore, let us leave this supreme city and our houses and go to the place where Yudhishthira is going." Dharmaraja Yudhishthira thought about this for a while and then sorrowfully addressed the sorrowing citizens. "The lord of the earth[50] is like our father, he is our greatest preceptor. It is our duty to unhesitatingly obey whatever he commands. O illustrious ones! You are our well-wishers. Circle around us and make us happy with your blessings. Then return home. When the time comes for you to do something for us, do that which is pleasing and is good for us." Having been thus addressed, the citizens circled the Pandavas and gave them their blessings. Then they returned to the city.

'When the citizens had returned, Vidura, who knew all the principles of dharma, spoke to the eldest Pandava so as to warn him. The learned one[51] spoke to the learned one[52] in nonsensical words,[53] "One who knows will act so as to avoid danger. There is a sharp weapon that can pierce the body, but is not made of iron. He who knows this is not killed and can turn it against the enemy. The burner of grass and the drier of dew do not kill animals in holes. He who protects himself through knowledge lives. The blind man doesn't see the way, because the blind man has no sense of direction. He who doesn't have perseverance is never prosperous. Know this and be alert. He who accepts an ironless weapon from the untrustworthy, can escape from the fire like a porcupine. Through travelling, a man gets to know the way and from the stars can deduce the directions. He who keeps the five[54] under self-control is never oppressed by the enemy." Having thus addressed the Pandavas, Vidura circled them, and having said farewell, returned to his house.

'After Vidura, Bhishma and the citizens had returned, Kunti went to Ajatashatru[55] and said, "What did kshatta[56] tell you among so many people? He spoke as if he said nothing and you replied similarly. We have not understood. If it is not inappropriate that we should know, I wish to know what you spoke to each other." Yudhishthira replied, "Vidura said that there is danger from poison and fire and that there should be no path that I do not know. He told me that the man who is self-controlled wins the entire world. I told Vidura that I had understood." On the eighth day of the month of Phalguna, when Rohini[57] was in the ascendant, they left for Varanavata and saw the city and its people.'

Vaishampayana said, 'Hearing that the Pandavas were coming, the citizens of Varanavata were delighted and swiftly came out in thousands, in various conveyances. In order to receive those best of men, they carried with them auspicious gifts, as laid down in the shastras. Coming to Kunti's sons, the citizens of Varanavata reverently surrounded them in a circle and uttered the blessed word "Jaya".[58] Thus surrounded by them, Dharmaraja Yudhishthira, tiger among men, looked like the one with the vajra in his hand,[59] surrounded by gods.

'Welcomed by the citizens and paying homage to them in return, those unblemished ones entered Varanavata, populated and decorated for the festival. O protector of the earth! Entering the city, the warriors first went to the houses of the Brahmanas engaged in their duties. They then went to the houses of the city officials and next to the houses of those with chariots.[60] Next they went to the houses of the Vaishyas and even to the houses of the Shudras. The citizens paid homage to the Pandavas, bulls among men. Next, with Purochana leading the way, they went to their house.[61] Purochana gave them beautiful food, drinks, beds and seats. Served by Purochana and worshipped by the town's citizens, they lived there, attired in expensive garments. When they had lived there for ten nights, Purochana told them about a house that was blessed, though it was actually unblessed. Attired in expensive garments, those tigers among men then entered the house at Purochana's request, like the guhyakas enter Kailasha. Inspecting the house, Yudhishthira, supreme among those who know all the dharma, told Bhimasena, "O scorcher of enemies! From the smell of fat and ghee mixed with lac, it is clear that this house is made of inflammable materials. The evil Purochana has used trusted and well-skilled artisans to build a house with straw, bark and cane, sprinkled all over with ghee. After winning my confidence, he wishes to burn me to death. O Partha![62] This is the danger that the immensely intelligent Vidura foresaw and warned me about earlier. But now that he has told us, we know this house to be full of danger, constructed by skilled artisans under Duryodhana's control." Bhimasena said, "If you think this house is inflammable, then let us go back to our earlier house."

'Yudhishthira said, "I think we should live here as if we are keen and suspect nothing and thus doomed to be destroyed. But we must find a certain way of escaping. If Purochana deduces from our appearance that we suspect, he may act quickly and suddenly burn us to death. Purochana does not shrink from outrage and sin. The evil one is based here on Suyodhana's[63] orders. The question remains whether grandfather Bhishma will be angry if we are burnt alive. Will he anger the Kouravas by displaying his anger to them? It may be that if we are burnt, grandfather Bhishma and other bulls of the Kuru lineage may be angry for the sake of dharma. But if we flee from this place, scared of being burnt, Suyodhana, avaricious for the kingdom, may kill us through

assassins. The evil Suyodhana has position, we have none. He has allies, we have none. He has a large treasury, we have no riches. There is no doubt that he can kill us through diverse means. Deceiving this evil one[64] and that evil one, Suyodhana, let us live here for some time, hiding where we go. Let us roam the earth the way hunters do, so that we become aware of all the routes that exist for escape. We will now secretly dig a hidden tunnel in the ground. If we can keep that a secret, the fire will not be able to destroy us. Let us live here in a way that neither Purochana nor the inhabitants of the city know what we are doing."'

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Vaishampayana said, 'O king! There was a skilled digger[65] who was Vidura's friend. This man came and spoke to the Pandava[66] secretly. "I have been sent by Vidura to do that which is pleasing to the Pandavas. I am well skilled in digging. Please tell me what I can do for you. Vidura told me to go to the Pandavas and do that which is for their welfare. He trusts me. What can I do for you? On the fourteenth night of this *krishnapaksha*,[67] Purochana will set fire to the door of your house. O Partha! I have heard that Dhritarashtra's son has decided to burn the Pandavas, bulls among men, together with their mother. O Pandava! Vidura told you something in the mleccha[68] language and you replied in that language. I am telling you this to establish my credentials."

'Yudhishthira, Kunti's truthful son, replied, "O agreeable one! I now know you to be a trusted and true friend of Vidura's, always devoted to him. There is nothing that learned one does not know. Just as you are his, you are ours. Do not distinguish between him and us. We are yours as much as his. Protect us the way that wise man does. I know Purochana built this inflammable house for me on the command of Dhritarashtra's son. That evil-hearted and malicious one, with control over riches and allies, has always oppressed us. Use all your efforts to save us from the fire. If we are burnt to death, Suyodhana's wishes will be fulfilled. That evil-hearted one's store of arms is there. This large house has been built along those walls. Vidura certainly knew in advance the evil crime that was being plotted and warned me about it. The danger that kshatta foresaw earlier is upon us now. Help us escape from that without Purochana knowing." The digger promised to help.

'Carefully, he began the work of excavation and made a deep tunnel under the ground. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! He built that tunnel in the centre of the house, with a narrow mouth and level with the ground, and covered it with wooden planks. Because of the fear of Purochana, the opening was thus covered. He[69] constantly kept a watch on the gate of the house. O king! They lived in the hole in the night, with their weapons ready. During the day, the Pandavas went out hunting, from

forest to forest. O king! Deceiving Purochana with a display of trustfulness and contentment, they were actually distrusting and discontented and lived very unhappily. The inhabitants of the city knew nothing about all this, except for Vidura's friend, the excellent digger.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'Having seen them live there for an entire year, happy and unsuspecting, Purochana was extremely delighted. Witnessing Purochana's delight, Yudhishthira, Kunti's virtuous son, spoke to Bhimasena, Arjuna and the twins. "The cruel-hearted and evil Purochana thinks us to be trusting and has been deceived well. I think the time has come for our escape. Let us escape, unobserved by anyone, after setting fire to the armoury, burning Purochana to death and leaving six bodies here."

'O king! On the occasion of giving alms, Kunti fed a large number of Brahmanas in the night. A number of women also came. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! They enjoyed themselves and ate and drank as much as they wished. When it was night, with Madhavi's[70] permission, they returned home. Driven by destiny and in search of food, a hunter woman also happened to come to the feast, accompanied by her five sons. All of them drank wine, until, with her sons, she was completely drunk. O ruler of men! She and her sons lost their senses and slept in that house, as if dead. When everyone was asleep and a violent storm started in the night, Bhima started a fire at the spot where Purochana was sleeping. The intense heat and great roar of the fire soon became manifest and awoke a large number of the citizens. The citizens said, "Under Duryodhana's instructions, the evil-minded one[71] built this house for his own destruction. Curse on Dhritarashtra, whose intelligence isn't impartial. He has burnt to death Pandu's pure sons, as if they are his enemies. As fate would have it, that evil-hearted and evil-minded one[72] has burnt those innocent and unsuspecting ones, supreme among men, and has himself been burnt." Thus did the citizens of Varanavata mourn, as they stood around the house throughout that entire night.

'However, with their mother, the grieving Pandavas emerged through the tunnel and fled quickly, unobserved. The scorchers of enemies, the Pandavas, could not move swiftly with their mother, because of fear and lack of sleep. O lord of kings! Bhimasena, with great speed and power, then took up all his brothers and his mother. With his great strength, the valorous one carried his mother on his shoulder, the twins on his hips and his brothers, the two Parthas,[73]on his arms. He shattered the trees with force and pounded the earth with his feet. The energetic Vrikodara rushed on, with the violence of a storm.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'When the night passed, all the city's inhabitants went there quickly to look for Pandu's sons. They put out the fire and saw that the house which had been burnt down had been constructed with lac and that the adviser Purochana had been burnt. The citizens said, "There is no doubt that the evil Duryodhana committed this act to destroy the Pandavas. Without a doubt, this was done with Dhritarashtra's knowledge. Otherwise, he would have prevented Dhritarashtra's son from burning Pandu's heirs. Indeed, Shantanu's son,[74] Drona, Vidura, Kripa and the other Kouravas haven't followed the dictates of dharma either. Let us send the news to the evil-hearted Dhritarashtra that his supreme desire has been fulfilled and that he has burnt to death the Pandavas." When they stirred the ashes to look for the Pandavas, they found the burnt hunter woman and her five sons. While cleaning up, the digger covered up the opening with debris, so that none of the men present noticed it.

'The citizens then sent the news to Dhritarashtra, that the Pandavas, together with the adviser Purochana, had been burnt in a fire. Hearing the terrible news of the death of Pandu's sons, King Dhritarashtra lamented in great sorrow. Dhritarashtra said, "When those warriors and their mother have been burnt to death, today my unparalleled brother, Pandu, is truly dead. Let men quickly go to Varanavata and perform the funeral ceremonies for those warriors and for the princess Kunti. Let the bones of the dead be sanctified in large and white receptacles. Let the well-wishers of the dead pay homage to them. Now that this has happened, let us spare no riches to perform acts that bring welfare to Kunti and the Pandavas." Having said this, surrounded by his relatives, Ambika's son[75] tendered offerings of water to Pandu's sons. Afflicted with grief, all the Kouravas lamented. But Vidura did not sorrow much, because he knew more.

'O lord of kings! After escaping from the city of Varanavata, the Pandavas swiftly moved on, heading towards the south. In the night, they found their way towards the south by the stars. O king! After a lot of suffering, they reached a deep forest. Pandu's sons were tired, thirsty and blind from lack of sleep. Yudhishthira again spoke to the immensely valorous Bhimasena. "What can be more painful than our being in this dense forest? We do not know the directions and we are incapable of proceeding further. We do not know if that evil Purochana has actually been burnt to death. Unobserved, how will we escape from these dangers? O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Carry us once again, as earlier, and let us proceed. Among us, you alone are strong and swift as the wind." Thus addressed by Dharmaraja, the immensely strong Bhimasena once more picked up Kunti and his brothers and walked with great strength.'

## 138

Vaishampayana said, 'O king! The force and speed of his thighs raised a storm, like strong winds when *shukra* and *shuchi* draw near.[76] He strode on, tearing down large

trees[77] with flowers and fruit on them and demolishing creepers that obstructed the way. He uprooted, with his immeasurable power, trees and bushes and his speed dazed Pandu's sons.[78] Using his arms as boats, he swam across many streams whose banks were distant. Fearing Dhritarashtra's son,[79] they assumed disguises. He carried his delicate and illustrious mother on his back, when the going was difficult, over riverbanks and uneven terrain.

'When it was evening, those bulls of the Bharata lineage reached an impenetrable forest where roots, fruits and water were scarce and the place was full of cruel birds of prey and beasts. The twilight became terrible and fearful with birds and beasts and the directions disappeared, as a storm was imminent. Those descendants of the Kuru lineage were tired and thirsty and overcome with sleep. They could proceed no further. Then Bhima entered a large, desolate and terrible forest. He saw a beautiful fig tree[80] that offered extensive shade.

'O bull among the Bharata lineage! Placing them there, he said, "O lord![81] Rest here. I am going to bring water. I hear the sweet voices of water-dwelling cranes. I am certain there must be a large lake here." O descendant of the Bharata lineage! His elder brother permitted him to go and he went where the water-dwelling cranes were. O bull among the Bharata lineage! There, he drank the water and bathed. O king! He brought water back by soaking his upper garment. Swiftly retracing his steps, he went to his mother, who was two measures of distance away.

'On seeing his mother and brothers asleep on the ground, Vrikodara was afflicted with great grief and lamented. "Earlier, they could not sleep in Varanavata on expensive beds. Now they are asleep on the ground. Kunti is the daughter of Kuntibhoja and is blessed with all the auspicious marks. She is the sister of Vasudeva, who grinds his enemies down. She is the daughter-in-law of Vichitravirya and the wife of the great-souled Pandu. She is as radiant as the filament of a lotus. The most delicate of all women, she should always sleep in palaces, on the most expensive of beds. Look at how she now sleeps on the ground. She has given birth to sons through Dharma, Indra and the wind-god. She is now tired and asleep on the ground like a common person. What more painful sight will I see than what I am seeing now? I see those tigers among men sleeping on the ground. The king, who is always devoted to dharma and who deserves all the three worlds as his kingdom, is tired and asleep on the ground like an ordinary person. He whose complexion is like the blue ocean[82] and who is unequalled among men is asleep on the ground like an ordinary person. What can be more painful than this? The twins, who are as handsome as the divine Ashvins, are asleep on the ground like ordinary men. He who has no evil relatives who defile his lineage lives happily, like a single tree in a village. When there is only one tree with leaves and fruits in a village, it is without kin, becomes sacred and venerated and is worshipped. They who have

many relatives who are virtuous and brave live happily in this world, without disease. They make the sons of their friends and relatives powerful and prosperous, living on each other's support like trees in a garden. We have been banished by the evil-souled Dhritarashtra and his sons. We escaped the conflagration he had instructed. Having escaped from that fire, we have now found refuge under this tree. Having suffered unequalled misfortunes, where will we go now? I think I see a city not far away from this forest. But someone should be awake while they are sleeping. Therefore, I will stay awake. When they awake and have rested, they can drink the water." Having decided this, Bhima himself stayed awake.'

# Section Nine

## Hidimba-vadha Parva

*This parva has 169 shlokas and six chapters.*

*Chapter 139: 32 shlokas*
*Chapter 140: 21 shlokas*
*Chapter 141: 24 shlokas*
*Chapter 142: 34 shlokas*
*Chapter 143: 38 shlokas*
*Chapter 144: 20 shlokas*

Vadha *means to slay or kill and this parva is about the killing of the rakshasa Hidimba.*

139

Vaishampayana said, 'Not very far from where they[1] slept in the forest, a rakshasa named Hidimba lived on a shala[2] tree. He was cruel, addicted to human flesh, very brave and very powerful, malformed, with yellow eyes, and terrible and fearful to look at. He was thirsty and hungry and was looking around, when he happened to see them. With his fingers extended upwards, he scratched the dry and unkempt hair on his head and yawning with his large mouth repeatedly, looked at them. The evil eater of human flesh, with a huge form and great strength, smelt humans and told his sister, "After a long time, I will today devour my favourite food. Anticipating the pleasure, my tongue is moist with saliva. My eight sharp-pointed teeth are impatient because they have had nothing to bite. I will dip them into these bodies and the delicious flesh. I will attack the human throats and arteries. I will drink copious quantities of the warm, fresh and foaming blood. Go and find out who are sleeping in the forest. The strong smell of humans alone pleases me. Kill those men and bring them to me. They are asleep in our territory and you need not fear. We will both eat a lot of flesh from these humans the way we like it. Quickly do what I tell you." O bull of the Bharata lineage! On hearing her brother's words, the *rakshasi* quickly went to where the Pandavas were. On going there, she saw that the Pandavas and Pritha[3] were asleep, while the invincible Bhimasena was awake.

'On seeing Bhimasena, whose shoulders were like a shala tree and who was unrivalled on earth in his beauty, the rakshasi was filled with desire. She thought, "This dark, mighty-armed, lion-shouldered, greatly radiant, conch-necked and lotus-eyed man is the right husband for me. I will not obey my brother's cruel orders. A wife's love is stronger than affection for a brother. If he is killed, my brother's pleasure and mine will be satisfied for a short while. But if I do not kill him, my gratification will be eternal." She

could assume any form at will. She adopted a beautiful human form and slowly came to where the mighty-armed Bhimasena was, like a shy creeper adorned in divine ornaments. With a smile, she then addressed him in these words. "O bull among men! Where have you come from and who are you? Who are these god-like men who are asleep here? O unblemished one! Who is this tall, dark and delicate lady, who is asleep trustfully in this forest as if it was her own home? Do you not know that this deep forest is inhabited by rakshasas? Here dwells the evil-minded rakshasa named Hidimba. O god-like man! I have been sent here by my brother, that evil rakshasa, with the intention of eating your flesh. But, on seeing you, like one who has emerged from the wombs of the gods, I honestly tell you that I desire no one but you as my husband. O learned one who knows the dharma! Please do that which is proper for me. My mind and body are overcome by desire. I wish to make you mine. Make me yours. O mighty-armed one! I will save you from the rakshasa who eats human flesh. O unblemished one! Become my husband and we will live in the safety of the mountains. I can travel in the sky and can go where I want. With me, you will find incomparable pleasure in those places."

'Bhimasena replied, "O rakshasi! For the sake of what power can a man leave his mother, elder brother and those who are younger than him? What man like me would gratify his desire while leaving his sleeping mother and brothers as food for a rakshasa?" The rakshasi replied, "I will do that which pleases you. Wake them all up. I will save all of you from the desire of that man-eating rakshasa." Bhimasena said, "O rakshasi! I will not awaken my mother and brothers, who are sleeping blissfully in this forest, out of fear for your evil-minded brother. O fearful one! There is no rakshasa who can withstand my valour. O one with beautiful eyes! Nor can any man, gandharva or yaksha. O slender lady! Go or stay, as you please. Or send your man-eating brother to me."'

140

Vaishampayana said, 'On seeing her delay, Hidimba, the lord of the rakshasas, got down from his tree and came to where the Pandavas were. His eyes were red, his arms were gigantic, his hair stood up and he had great strength. His complexion was like that of clouds, his teeth were sharp and his face was aflame. On seeing this malformed one descend,[4] Hidimba[5] was frightened and told Bhimsena, "The evil-minded maneater is coming and he is angry. You and your brothers do what I ask you to. O brave one! Since I have the power of the rakshasas, I can go wherever I want, at will. Climb onto my hips and I will carry you through the sky. O scorcher of enemies! Awake your mother and brothers who are sleeping. Taking all of them, I will travel through the sky." Bhima replied, "O lady with the broad hips! Do not be afraid. I am certain that as long as I am here, no one can harm us. O slender-waisted one! I will kill him before your eyes. O frightened one! The worst of rakshasas is no match for my strength. All the rakshasas

together cannot stand up to me in a fight. Look at my arms, as round as the trunks of an elephant. Look at my thighs, like iron clubs. Look at my broad and hard chest. O beautiful one! Today, you will be witness to my valour, like that of Indra. O broad-hipped one! Do not think that I am only a man and consider me to be weak." Hidimba replied, "O tiger among men! You are like a god. I do not consider you to be weak. But I have witnessed the power this rakshasa has unleashed on men."

'O descendant of the Bharata lineage! While Bhimasena was engaged in this conversation with her, the man-eating rakshasa heard these words and was furious. He also saw Hidimba in human form, the crown of her head bedecked with flowers and her face like the full moon. Her eyebrows, nose, eyes and the tips of her hair were beautiful and her nails and skin were delicate. She was adorned with all kinds of ornaments and attired in a fine and transparent dress. On seeing her in that beautiful and deluding human form, the maneater thought she was lusting for a man and became furious. O best of the Kurus! Becoming very angry with his sister, the rakshasa dilated his gigantic eyes and told her, "Who is the deluded one who comes in my way when I am hungry? O Hidimba! Have you become so senseless that you are not frightened of my anger? Shame on you, you who lust after men! You do that which causes me displeasure. You bring disrepute to all the chief rakshasas, your ancestors. Today, I will kill you, together with all those for whose sake you have done this great injury to me." Having addressed Hidimba in these words, the red-eyed Hidimba gnashed his teeth against each other and rushed at her, with the intention of killing her. On seeing him rush at her, Bhima, the supreme wielder of all weapons, reproached him strongly, asking him to stop.'

## 141

Vaishampayana said, 'Seeing that the rakshasa was furious with his sister, Bhimasena laughed in scorn and said, "O Hidimba! Why are you waking those who are sleeping peacefully? O evil one! Attack me quickly, you eater of men! Use your blows on me. You should not kill a woman who has done no wrong, especially since she has been wronged against. Afflicted by desire for me, this woman has no control over herself. She has been goaded by the bodiless one[6] who has pervaded her body. O evil one! You bring disrepute to your lineage. Your sister came here on your instructions and, on seeing my beauty, the timid one was afflicted by desire. O evil-souled rakshasa! The wrong was committed by Ananga,[7] she has not erred. While I am here, you will not kill a woman. O eater of men! Come to me and fight it out, one against another. Today, I will singly send you to the land of Yama. O rakshasa! Your head will be squashed on the ground till it breaks, as if squashed by the foot of a powerful elephant. When I have killed you in the fight today, your body will be happily torn apart by carnivorous animals, hawks and jackals. In an instant, I will free this forest of its thorn. It has been polluted for too long a time by those who eat men. Today, your sister will see how I drag the evil one, like a

lion drags a large elephant that is the size of a mountain. O worst of the rakshasas! When you have been killed by me, the men who live in this forest will roam safely in the forest, without hindrance."

'Hidimba said, "Human! What is the need for this pointless roaring and bragging? Perform the actions first, then comes the bragging. Don't take long. You think yourself to be powerful and valorous. In your fight with me today, you will find out that I am stronger. Till that time, I will not harm those who are sleeping and dreaming. I shall first kill you, the stupid one who speaks such wicked words. After drinking your blood from your body, I will kill them and then this one,[8] who has done that which brought displeasure to me." Having uttered these words, the maneater stretched out his arms and angrily dashed towards Bhimasena, the conqueror of enemies.

'But the immensely powerful Bhima quickly seized his arms and laughingly flung him down. Seizing the struggling demon with great force, Bhima dragged him eight bow-lengths away, like a lion drags a small deer. At that, the furious rakshasa clasped the Pandava Bhimasena with great force and let out a terrible roar. Yet again, the immensely strong Bhima dragged him away, so that the sound would not wake his brothers who were happily sleeping. Clasping and dragging each other with great force, both Bhimasena and the rakshasa exhibited supreme strength. Fighting like two enraged sixty-year-old elephants, they tore down large trees and ripped off the creepers that grew around. At that great noise, those bulls among men[9] and their mother woke up and saw Hidimba standing before them.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'Waking up, those tigers among men,[10] together with Pritha, were astonished on seeing the divine beauty of Hidimba. Then, astonished at the richness of her beauty, Kunti looked at her and addressed her in soft, gentle and assuring words. "O beautiful one, equal to the offspring of the gods! Who are you? Where have you come from? What business has brought you here? Are you the goddess of this forest or are you an apsara? Tell me everything and also tell me why you are standing here."

'Hidimba replied, "The great forest that you see, blue like monsoon clouds, is the habitation of the rakshasa Hidimba and me. O noble lady! Know me to be the sister of the lord of the rakshasas. O honoured lady! My brother sent me here to kill you and your sons. I came here on the instructions of that cruel one and saw your immensely powerful son, with a complexion like that of pure gold. O fortunate lady! Then, under the influence of Manmatha,[11] who pervades the essence of everything, I fell under your son's spell. Therefore, I chose your immensely powerful son to be my husband. Though I tried to control my passion, I could not. Since I was delayed, the maneater himself came here to kill all these sons of yours. But he has been flung on the ground and dragged

away by your great-souled and wise son, my husband. Look at the man and the rakshasa, both with great strength and valour, grasping each other with great force and fighting and roaring." On hearing these words, Yudhishthira, Arjuna, Nakula and the valorous Sahadeva quickly got up. They saw those two fighting, grasping and dragging each other, desirous of victory like two immensely powerful lions. They grasped and dragged each other again and again. Dust rose from the earth like billowing smoke from a forest fire. Covered with the dust of earth, they were enveloped like two mountains in whirling mists.

'On seeing Bhima oppressed at the hands of the rakshasa, Partha[12] slowly said, as if in jest, "O Bhima! O one with mighty arms! Do not be afraid. We did not know that you were tired from fighting this terrible rakshasa. O Partha![13] I am here to help you. I shall kill the rakshasa, while Nakula and Sahadeva will guard our mother." Bhima replied, "Watch this fight as a neutral. You don't have to take part. When I have got him in my clutches, he will not live for long." Arjuna said, "O Bhima! What is the need to keep this evil rakshasa alive for so long? O conqueror of enemies! We have to leave this place as quickly as we can. We cannot stay here longer. Before long, the east will redden. The morning dawn is about to set in. At the *roudra*[14] moment, the rakshasas become stronger. O Bhima! Be quick. Kill the terrible rakshasa before he begins to use his powers of delusion.[15] Therefore, show the strength of your arms." Having been thus addressed by Arjuna, Bhima threw up the body of the terrible rakshasa and whirled it around a hundred times.

'Bhima said, "Your body has thrived in vain on impure flesh. Your intelligence is in vain and you have aged in vain. Therefore, you deserve a useless death. Today, I will end your useless existence." Arjuna said, "If you think that killing this rakshasa in battle is too onerous a task, let me help you. O Vrikodara![16] Kill him quickly. Otherwise, let me kill him. You are tired and have almost finished the work. You deserve to rest now." On hearing these words, Bhimasena was enraged. Crushing him on the ground with all his strength, he killed him the way one kills an animal. As he was thus being killed by Bhima, he let out a mighty roar that filled the entire forest, like the sound of a kettledrum drenched in water. Then the strong son[17] of Pandu held the body in his hands and tore it into two, pleasing the Pandavas with the strength of his arms. On seeing Hidimba killed, they were delighted and swiftly congratulated Bhimasena, a tiger among men and conqueror of enemies. Worshipping the great-souled Bhima of terrible strength, Arjuna again told Vrikodara, "O lord! I think there is a city not far from this forest. O fortunate one! Let us go there quickly, before Suyodhana[18] discovers us." The scorchers of enemies and tigers among men[19] agreed, as did their mother, and left, with the rakshasi Hidimba following.'

‘Bhimasena said, “The rakshasas remember their enmity and use delusions.[20] O Hidimba! Therefore, you also follow the path that your brother has taken.” Yudhishthira said, “O tiger among men! O Bhima! Do not kill a woman even in anger. O Pandava! Following the righteous path is more important than preservation of the physical body. You have killed the immensely powerful rakshasa who came here with the intention of killing us. What can his sister do to us, even if she is angry?”’

Vaishampayana said, ‘Thereupon, Hidimba respectfully saluted Kunti and Yudhishthira with joined hands and told Kunti, “O honoured lady! You are familiar with the pangs women suffer through Ananga.[21] O fortunate lady! I am now suffering those pangs for Bhimasena. I have suffered that great misery, waiting for the right time. But now that time has come and I expect my happiness. O fortunate lady! I have left my friends, relatives and my designated path. I have chosen your son, this tiger among men, as my husband. O illustrious lady! Will the choice of a woman be rejected because of the way I speak? O greatly fortunate lady! Whether you think me stupid or whether you think that I am devoted to you, please unite me with your son, my husband. O fortunate lady! Let me go as I wish, taking this god-like one. Trust me that I shall bring him back here. Whenever you think of me, I shall immediately come to you and swiftly carry these bulls among men on my shoulders, over pastures and difficult terrain, wherever you wish to go. Please take pity on me and let Bhimasena make love to me. It is in accordance with what is right that one should preserve oneself from disaster and act accordingly, by whatever means. One who follows this righteous path in calamities is supreme among those who know what is right. Calamities are the greatest danger to what is right and to righteous ones. What preserves life is holy and, therefore, what grants life is what is holy. The means through which this righteousness is ensured can never deserve condemnation.”[22] Yudhishthira replied, “O Hidimba! There is no doubt that what you have said is true. O lady with the slender waist! Act in accordance with the righteous path, as you have described it to be. O fortunate lady! When he has bathed, performed his ablutions and finished all rites, he will make love to you until the sun sets. O you who are swift as the mind! Have your pleasure with him, as you wish, during the day. But you must bring Bhimasena back every night.” Having taken an oath to do this, the rakshasi Hidimba then took Bhimasena up and rose into the sky.

‘Assuming the most beautiful of forms, adorned in every kind of ornament and sometimes breaking out in sweet music, she pleasured with the Pandava on beautiful mountain peaks cared for by the gods and always frequented by animals and birds; and also in forests and mountain passes with flowering trees and creepers; in beautiful ponds adorned with lotuses and water lilies; in islands on rivers where the gravel was like lapis lazuli and in mountain streams where the woods and the water were pure; on the shores of the ocean with jewels and gold; in beautiful cities and in forests with large

shala trees; in forests sacred to the gods and the peaks of mountains; in the dwelling places of the guhyakas and the hermitages of ascetics; and along the waters of Lake Manasa,[23] abounding in flowers and fruit in all seasons. Assuming a beautiful form, she pleasured with the Pandava. In every such place, the one who was as swift as the mind, pleasured with Bhima.

'From Bhimasena, the rakshasi then gave birth to an immensely powerful son. He had a fearful appearance, with terrible eyes, a large mouth and ears like spikes. His form was distorted. His lips were brown as copper and his teeth were sharp, with great strength in them. He had mighty arms, possessed great energy and was born extremely valorous, a great archer. He had great speed, with gigantic size and was a conqueror of enemies, greatly skilled in the powers of delusion. Though born from a man, with great speed and great strength, he had nothing human in him. He surpassed all pishachas and other such creatures, not to speak of humans. O lord of men! Although a child, by human standards he seemed to be a fully grown youth. He became a powerful and supreme hero, skilled in the use of all the weapons that are known.

'Rakshasa women give birth on the day they conceive. They are capable of assuming any form they want and they can adopt many different forms. The child who had grown and become a supreme archer, then saluted his father and mother by touching their feet. They gave him a name. His mother said, "He is shiny like a pot,"[24] and his name became Ghatotkacha. Ghatotkacha was devoted to the Pandavas and they always loved him. He became one of them. Knowing that the prescribed time of her stay with them was over, Hidimba made another agreement with them[25] and went where she wanted. Ghatotkacha, the best of rakshasas, told his father that he would come whenever he was required and left for the north. He had been created by the great-souled Maghavan[26] as a powerful antagonist against the great-souled maharatha Karna.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'O king! The maharathas[27] then went from one forest to another, killing many animals and travelling fast, through the lands of Matysa, Trigarta, Panchala and Kichaka, where they saw many beautiful woods and lakes. All of them had their hair in matted locks and they wore barks of trees and deerskin. Those great-souled ones and Kunti assumed the form of ascetics. Sometimes, the maharathas had to hasten, and carried their mother. Sometimes, they proceeded slowly and in the open.[28] They studied about the brahman in the Vedas and all the Vedangas and nitishastra.[29]

'At that time, those wise ones met their grandfather.[30] Having respectfully saluted Krishna Dvaipayana, those scorchers of enemies[31] and their mother stood before him with joined palms. Vyasa said, "O bulls of the Bharata lineage! I had known in advance

how Dhritarashtra's sons would not follow the righteous path and would unjustly banish you. Having known this, I have now come for your welfare. It is not right to sorrow. Know that this will bring future happiness. There is no doubt that you and they are equal in my eyes. But men love more those who suffer from ill fortune or are young. Therefore, my love for you is now greater. As a result of that love, I wish to do something good for you. Listen to me. Not far from here, there is a beautiful town that is a safe place for you. Go and live there in disguise and wait for my return." After he had thus comforted the Parthas,[32] the conquerors of enemies Vyasa led them to Ekachakra.

'The lord[33] also comforted Kunti. "O daughter! Live. Your son Yudhishthira, the son of dharma, will rule righteously over all the kings on earth. Well versed in righteousness, he will conquer the earth through his virtue, aided by the might of Bhima and Arjuna. There is no doubt that he will rule. Your sons and those of Madri, all maharathas, will enjoy themselves happily in their own kingdom. Conquering the entire earth, those tigers among men will perform rajasuya,[34]*ashvamedha*[35] and other sacrifices, in which the alms given will be very large. They will rule over the kingdom of their father and grandfathers and ensure their friends and relatives enjoy pleasures and prosperity." Having said this, rishi Dvaipayana took them to the house of a Brahmana and told the best[36] of the Parthas, "Wait for me. I will return for you. You will find great happiness if you learn to adjust to time and place." O ruler of men! With joined hands, they said, "So it shall be." Lord Vyasa, the fortunate rishi, then went away where he wanted to.'

# Section Ten

## Baka-vadha Parva

*This parva has 206 shlokas and eight chapters.*

*Chapter 145: 40 shlokas*
*Chapter 146: 36 shlokas*
*Chapter 147: 24 shlokas*
*Chapter 148: 16 shlokas*
*Chapter 149: 20 shlokas*
*Chapter 150: 27 shlokas*
*Chapter 151: 24 shlokas*
*Chapter 152: 19 shlokas*

*This parva is about the killing of a demon named Baka.*

145

Janamejaya said, 'O best of those who are born twice! What did the maharatha Pandavas, the sons of Kunti, do after going to Ekachakra?'

Vaishampayana said, 'After going to Ekachakra, the maharatha Pandavas, the sons of Kunti, lived in a Brahmana's house for a short while. O king of the world! They then begged for alms. They saw many beautiful woods, distant parts of the earth, countries, rivers and lakes. Because of their many qualities, they became the favourites of the citizens. Every night, they handed over their alms to Kunti. She divided it into parts and each separately ate his share. The valorous ones, the scorchers of foes, and their mother ate half. The immensely powerful Bhima ate the other half entirely. O best of the Bharata lineage! O king! Those great-souled ones lived there like that and a great deal of time passed.

'One day, when the bulls of the Bharata lineage had gone out begging, Bhimasena was at home with Pritha[1] for company. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Then Kunti heard a great uproar in the Brahmana's house, terrible sounds of lamentations. O king! Because of her compassion and goodness, the lady[2] could not bear the sight of that weeping and lamenting. Feeling sorry, the virtuous Pritha then spoke to Bhima in compassionate words. "O son! Unknown to the sons of Dhritarashtra, we have lived happily in this Brahmana's house, respected and treated well by him. O son! I have always thought about what can be good for the Brahmana and what I can do to please him, as those who happily live in others' houses should. He is truly a man who returns what is received and such an act is never destroyed. One should do more good than others do to one. Without a doubt, this Brahmana has fallen into some grief. If we can

be of any help to him, that will be a good deed." Bhima said, "Let us find out what the distress is and how it has arisen. Having learnt it, I shall try to remove it,[3] no matter how difficult it will be." O ruler of the world! When those two were thus conversing, they heard a pitiful wail from the Brahmana and his wife.

'Like Surabhi[4] dashes at her tethered calf, Kunti hurried towards the inner quarters of the great-souled Brahmana. She saw there the Brahmana, his wife, his son and his daughter, their faces distorted with grief.

'The Brahmana said, "Cursed be this worldly life, without meaning, and like the substance of fire. Its root is unhappiness, slavery to others and it is based on great sorrow. To live means to suffer great misery, to live means to suffer a great fever. Without a doubt, those who live have to choose between evils. The atman may be one, but one has to serve dharma, artha and kama. The simultaneous pursuit of these leads to great misery. Some say that salvation is the greatest object, but it can never be reached. The acquisition of artha is hell, its desire creates misery. Great is unhappiness for those who desire wealth, greater for those who have acquired it. There is attachment to the acquired wealth and when it is lost, unhappiness is greater. I do not see any way of escaping from this danger unless I run away with my wife and son to a healthier place. O *brahmani*![5] I have told you before that we should go to a place that is safe, but you didn't listen to my words then. O foolish woman! When I repeatedly asked, you said, 'I was born here. I grew old here. This is my father's house.' Your father is now dead and your old mother died a long time ago. Your relatives are also dead. Why was there the desire to live here? You didn't listen to my words as a result of affection towards your relatives. We are now faced with the terrible misery that comes from losing a relative. How can I bear it? Perhaps the time has come for my own death. I cannot live like a cruel one after abandoning one of my own relatives.

'"Always giving, you have been my companion in all virtuous acts. You are like a mother to me. The gods gave you to me as a friend. You have been my chief support. My father and mother gave you to me as a partner in my duties as a householder. I chose you in accordance with the law. I married you in accordance with the mantras. You were born into a good family. You have a good nature. You are the mother of my children. You have always been faithful to me. You are chaste and have never harmed anyone. You have always been constant in your vows. I cannot give up my wife in order to save my own life.

'"How can I sacrifice my daughter? She is still a child, not yet an adult, and without any signs of coming of age. The great-souled creator gave her to me in trust so that I could find her a husband. Through her, together with my ancestors, I will be able to attain worlds reached by those who have sons through their daughters. How can I give up a daughter I have fathered myself? Some men think that a father loves a son more than a daughter. Not I. I love them equally. How can I give up this innocent girl? On her

are based my continuity and the worlds that bring eternal bliss.

'"If I sacrifice myself and go to the other world, I will still have to repent. Abandoned by me, they will not be able to live. To give up any one of these[6] will be a cruel act, condemned by those who are learned. But if I sacrifice myself, they will also die without me. Great distress has befallen me. I do not know how to escape. I am cursed. What path will I and my relatives follow? It is better that I should die with all of them. I cannot live."'

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'The brahmani said, "You must not grieve like a common person. For someone who is as learned as you, this is not the time to grieve. All men must certainly come to an end. If something is certain, one should not grieve over it. A man desires a wife, a son and a daughter for his own sake. Therefore, since you have great learning, abandon this grief. I shall go there myself. It is the supreme and eternal duty of women in this world that they should give up their lives for the welfare of their husbands. Done by me, such an act will bring you happiness. It will also bring me eternal fame in this world and the hereafter. What I have told you is the highest dharma. Through this, it will perceptibly bring you artha and dharma. You have already obtained from me the purpose for which a man acquires a wife—a daughter and a son. Through this, I have been freed from the debt I owe you.

'"You are capable of supporting and protecting your children. I cannot protect and support the children as you can. You have given me all that I desire and protected me from all danger. If I am abandoned by you, how can these young children and I survive? How can an unprotected widow with two young children support them both, while treading a path of virtue? How can I protect our daughter when she is wooed by arrogant and selfish suitors who are unworthy of an alliance with you? Like birds grabbing a lump of meat thrown on the ground, all men crave women without their husbands. O best of the twice-born! Solicited by evil-hearted ones, I might waver and might not be able to stick to the path of virtue. How can I ensure that this only daughter of the lineage, young and innocent, walks along the path trodden by her forefathers? How can I teach this young boy, fatherless and without a protector, every desirable quality so as to make him as learned in virtue as you? When I am in this state, those who are unworthy will overcome me and demand this unprotected girl, like Shudras craving to hear the Vedas. If I refuse to give her, endowed with all qualities and with your blood, they may forcibly carry her away, like crows after sacrificial offerings. When they see a son who is unlike you and your daughter under the control of those who are unworthy, I will be despised in the worlds. O Brahmana! I do not know what will happen to me, under the control of the arrogant. But there is no doubt that I shall die. There is no doubt that these young children, deprived of you and of me, will perish

like fish when the water dries up. There is no doubt that without you, all three of us will perish in this way. Therefore, you should sacrifice me.

'"O Brahmana! Those who are learned in dharma have said that the supreme salvation of women is to go on the last journey before their husbands and not remain under the protection of their sons. For you, I am ready to give up this son and this daughter, my relatives and my life. To be always engaged in what pleases her husband is a greater duty for a woman than sacrifices, austerities, vows and donation of alms. Thus, the act I wish to perform is in conformity with the supreme dharma. It is for the welfare of you and of the lineage. The virtuous say that objects of desire, children, possessions and friends, even the wife, are cherished to rescue oneself in a time of distress. O you who have extended your lineage! The wise ones have said that if all one's relations are placed on one side of the scale, they do not equal oneself on the other side. My lord! Thus, do through me what has to be done. Save yourself by sacrificing me. Give me permission and protect my children. In deciding the path of virtue for men, those who are learned in dharma have said that women should never be killed and that rakshasas also know dharma. Therefore, he may not kill me. It is certain that he will kill a man. But it is doubtful that he will kill a woman. O you who are learned in dharma! Therefore, you should let me go. I have enjoyed my life. I have enjoyed great happiness. I have trodden the path of dharma. Through you, I have borne beloved children. I will not grieve if I have to die. I have borne a son and I have grown old. I have always desired to do that which pleases you. Counting all my blessings, I have arrived at my decision. O revered one! You can take another wife after you have sacrificed me. You will then again be able to tread the path of dharma. O virtuous man! To have more than one wife is not a sin among men. But it is a grave sin for a woman to have another husband after the first. Having considered all this and realizing that your self-sacrifice must be condemned, today, without any delay, save yourself, your lineage and these two children through me."'

Vaishampayana said, 'O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On hearing her words, her husband embraced her. Stricken with grief, he shed copious tears, along with his wife.'

## 147

Vaishampayana said, 'When the daughter heard these words of her parents, who were extremely sorrowful, she was overcome with grief and spoke to them. "Why are you lamenting so grievously? Why are you weeping as if you have no one to protect you? Now listen to what I have to say. On hearing my words, do what is proper. There is no doubt that dharma dictates that I have to be sacrificed at some time. Since I have to be abandoned in any case, abandon me now and save everyone through me alone. That is the reason men desire children, so that they can be saved. That time has come. Use me

as a boat and save yourselves. A child saves everywhere, in this world and in the next. It is because a child saves everywhere that the learned know a child by the name of putra.[7] My grandfathers have always desired to have daughter's sons through me. Now I shall myself save them by saving my father's life. My brother is very young. There is no doubt that he will soon perish after you have left this world. When my father has gone to heaven and my younger brother has perished, the funeral cakes offered to the ancestors will come to an end and that act will displease them. Having been abandoned by my father, my mother and my brother, I shall descend from misery to misery and will finally perish in great distress. There is no doubt that if you are healthy and can save yourself, my mother and my child brother, and our lineage, the practice of offering funeral cakes will continue. The son is one's own self. The wife is one's friend. The daughter is the cause of suffering. Save yourself from that cause of suffering. Set me on the path of dharma. O father! Without you, I will be an unprotected and wretched girl, going everywhere and whenever, always miserable. Therefore, I shall save my lineage and I shall acquire the merit that this difficult act brings. O best of the twice-born! If you abandon me and go there,[8] I will be greatly oppressed. Therefore, be kind to me. O good father! Abandon me, who am to be abandoned eventually. Save yourself for my sake, for the sake of dharma and for the sake of your lineage. There should not be any delay in performing the inevitable. By offering them[9] water, you will do that which is good. What can be more painful to us than you ascending to heaven and our roaming like dogs, begging food from others? But if you are saved from this calamity with your relatives[10] and are healthy, I shall be very happy in the immortal world." When they heard her piteous lamentations, all three, the father, the mother and the daughter, began to weep.

'Then, on seeing all of them cry, their young son uttered these mumbling words, his eyes wide open. "O father! O mother! And you too, O sister! Do not cry." Saying this, he smilingly came to each of them. Picking up a blade of grass, he again said happily, "I will kill the man-eating rakshasa with this." Though they were overcome with grief, hearing the mumbling words of the child, they were cheered up. Knowing that this was the right time, Kunti went to them and thus spoke, like ambrosia reviving the dead.'

## 148

'Kunti said, "I wish to learn exactly from you the reason for this grief. On learning it, I will remove the cause from you, if it can be removed."

'The Brahmana said, "O lady blessed with austerities! What you have said is worthy of righteous ones. But removal of this grief is beyond humans. Not far from this town lives a rakshasa named Baka. That immensely powerful one is the lord of this town and this country. That evil-minded maneater, chief among asuras, and with the power of

rakshasas, rules over and protects this town, this country and this region, sustained through human flesh. Thus protected by him, we have no fear from any encirclement by enemies or any living beings. But his stipend has been fixed to a supply of food—a cartload of rice, two buffaloes and the human who takes these to him. One after another, all the people provide him with food. After intervals of many years, this difficult task comes to a particular man and it is impossible to escape. If men ever try to escape their turn, the rakshasa eats them up, with their wives and children.

'"The king lives in a place known as Vetrakiyagriha. But he makes no efforts to free his subjects from this danger for good. We deserve all of this, because we live in continued harassment in the kingdom of a weak and incompetent king. Brahmanas are free to live, as they wish, on anyone's land.[11] They base themselves on their qualities and like birds freely go where they will. It is said that first one should find a king, then a wife, and then riches. By acquiring all three, one can maintain one's relatives and one's sons. But in acquiring these three, I have chosen the wrong order. Therefore, having fallen into this danger, I am suffering great grief. It is now my turn and it will destroy my family. I shall have to provide food and a man as stipend. I don't have the riches to purchase a man. Nor am I able to give up someone who is dear to me. I do not see any means of saving myself from that rakshasa. I am immersed in this great ocean of grief from which no escape seems possible. Today, I will go to that rakshasa with my entire family, so that the evil one can eat all of us together."'

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'Kunti said, "Do not grieve because of this fear. I see a means through which you can escape from that rakshasa. You have an only son who is a child and an only daughter who is engaged in austerities. It does not seem right to me that they, you or your wife should go there. O Brahmana! I have five sons. One of them will go, taking on your behalf the offerings to that evil rakshasa."

'The Brahmana said, "In order to live, I can never do this. For the sake of saving my own life, I cannot cause the death of a Brahmana and a guest. Even those who are of low birth and sinful refuse to do this. One should sacrifice oneself and one's children for the sake of a Brahmana. I consider this principle to be the best for me and I would like to follow it. Between the death of a Brahmana and my own, it seems to me that the latter is better. There is no salvation from the great sin of killing a Brahmana. Even if I do it without the right frame of mind, it is better for me to sacrifice myself. O fortunate lady! In sacrificing myself, I will not commit the crime of self-destruction, because there is no sin if someone else does the killing. But if I deliberately kill a Brahmana, I will commit a cruel and vile act, from which there is no means of atonement. The learned have said that the sacrifice of someone who has come to your house or has sought your protection or the killing of a supplicant are cruel and sinful deeds. Great-souled ones,

learned in principles that should be followed at times of distress, have earlier said that one should never commit cruel deeds capable of censure. It is best for me that I should perish today with my wife, than that I should ever cause the killing of a Brahmana."

'Kunti said, "O Brahmana! It is also my firm view that Brahmanas must always be protected. If I had 100 sons, I would not love any one of them less. But this rakshasa will not be able to kill my son. My son is full of energy, valorous and has knowledge of the mantras. He will deliver all that food to the rakshasa, but it is my firm conviction that he will be able to save himself. Earlier, I have myself seen that powerful and gigantic rakshasas have fought with that brave one and have been killed, one after another. O Brahmana! But do not reveal this to anyone through any means. For people, curious and wishing to learn,[12] will trouble my sons. The learned have said that if my son parts with this knowledge without the permission of his preceptor, the receiver will not gain from it."'

Vaishampayana said, 'Hearing these words of Pritha,[13] the Brahmana and his wife were very happy and agreed to her words, which were like ambrosia.[14] Then, Kunti and the Brahmana went to Anila's son[15] and said, "Do this." "So shall it be," was his reply.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Bhima said that he would do it before all the Pandavas returned there after collecting their alms.[16] Looking at his[17] appearance, Pandu's son Yudhishthira guessed and sitting down with his mother, alone and privately, asked her, "What is the exploit that the immensely powerful Bhima wishes to undertake? Is it something he wishes to do on his own or is it something you have commanded?" Kunti replied, "On my instructions, the scorcher of enemies[18] will perform this great task, for the sake of the Brahmana and in order to save this town."

'Yudhishthira said, "What have you done in your extreme rashness? This is a difficult task. The learned have certainly never praised the sacrifice of one's own son. Why do you wish to sacrifice your own son for the sake of someone else's? You have performed an act of abandoning your son. This is not approved by the worlds and by the Vedas. Through the strength of his arms all of us sleep in peace and hope to recover the kingdom that the evil ones have deprived us of. It is because of his infinite powers that Duryodhana, Shakuni and all the others spend sleepless nights of worry. Through his valour we escaped from the burning of the house of lac and other dangers when Purochana was killed. It is through dependence on his valour that we believe that we have already acquired this earth and its riches and have killed Dhritarashtra's sons. What came to your mind that you deliberately decided to sacrifice him? Have you lost your senses and your intelligence because of the miseries?"

'Kunti said, "O Yudhishthira! You need not lament over Vrikodara.[19] I did not take

my decision because of the weakness of my intelligence. O son! We have lived happily in the house of this Brahmana. O son! I wish to regard this as our compensation. A man is true to the extent he recognizes a good deed. Having witnessed Bhima's valour in the house of lac and in the killing of Hidimba, I have great confidence in Vrikodara. The strength in Bhima's arms is as much as that in 10,000[20] elephants. It is because of this that he was able to carry us, as heavy as elephants, from Varanavata. There has been no one, nor will there be any one, as strong as Vrikodara. In battle, he is the equal of the best, the wielder of the vajra[21] himself. Earlier, as soon as he was born, he fell from my lap on a mountain. Through the hardness of his body, he shattered the rock into pieces. O Pandava! From that day, I have known Bhima's strength and, remembering it, I wished to repay the Brahmana. I have not done this from folly, delusion or desire for gain. I have consciously desired to perform this act because it is what dharma requires. O Yudhishthira! Two objectives will be attained in this way. We will repay the Brahmana for his lodging us and we will obtain great religious merit. I have heard that a Kshatriya who helps a Brahmana in any way obtains the fortunate worlds after death. A Kshatriya who saves the life of another Kshatriya obtains great fame in this world and the next. A Kshatriya who helps a Vaishya on this earth is certainly loved by the subjects in all the worlds. A king who frees a Shudra who comes to him for protection is reborn in a wealthy family in his next life and is revered by other kings. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! Earlier, the illustrious and extremely wise Lord Vyasa told me this. That is why I want to act in this way."

'Yudhisthira said, "O mother! What you have intelligently decided to do, driven by compassion for the poor Brahmana, is indeed right. It is certain that Bhima will kill that maneater and return alive. But the Brahmana must carefully be told that he must restrain himself, so that the inhabitants of this town do not find out."'

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Vaishampayana said, 'Thereafter, when night had passed, Pandava Bhimasena took the food with him and left for the place where the maneater lived. Reaching the forest where the rakshasa lived, the immensely strong Pandava began to eat the food himself and called out to the rakshasa by name. Then, on hearing Bhimasena's words, the rakshasa was greatly enraged and came to where Bhima was. His body was huge and his speed was swift, as if he was breaking up the ground. His forehead was furrowed into three lines and he bit his lips. On seeing Bhimasena eating the food, the rakshasa dilated his eyes and angrily said, "Who are you, stupid one, who dares to eat these offerings meant for me, that too in front of my own eyes? Do you wish to go to the land of the dead?" O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On hearing this, Bhimasena began to laugh. Ignoring the rakshasa, he turned his head away and continued to eat.

'Uttering a terrible roar and raising both arms high, the maneater rushed at

Bhimasena, with the intention of killing him. Even then, Pandava Vrikodara, the killer of enemy warriors, ignored the rakshasa. Casting only a glance, he went on eating. Greatly enraged, the rakshasa struck a mighty blow with both his hands on the back of Kunti's son. Though Bhima was powerfully struck by those arms, he did not even look up, and continued to eat. Thereupon, the rakshasa became even more enraged. He uprooted a tree and powerfully dashed at Bhima, so as to strike him again. Bhima, bull among men and immensely strong, slowly finished eating all the food. He washed himself and then cheerfully stood up to fight. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The valorous Bhima laughingly caught the tree that had been angrily hurled in his left hand. Then that powerful one hurled many other trees at Bhimasena and the Pandava Bhima also hurled many at him. O great king! The terrible and great fight between Baka and the Pandava with trees went on, denuding the forest of its trees. Announcing his name, Baka dashed at the Pandava and grasped the immensely powerful Bhimasena in both his arms. Bhimasena also grasped the rakshasa in his great arms and began to violently drag the swift and strong one.[22]

'Dragged by Bhima and also dragging the Pandava, the maneater was gradually overcome by great fatigue. The earth shook because of their violent movements. Giant trees that stood there were shattered into pieces. O bull among the Bharata lineage! On seeing the rakshasa fading away, Vrikodara pressed him down on the ground and began to strike him with his arms. Powerfully pushing the middle of his[23] back down with one knee, the Pandava grabbed his neck with his right hand and his loincloth with the left, and then ripped the rakshasa into two with great force. O ruler of the earth! Uttering a terrible roar, the fearsome rakshasa was torn into two by Bhima and vomited blood.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'O king! Frightened by that noise, the rakshasa's relatives and their attendants came out of their houses. On seeing them terrified and bereft of reason, the powerful Bhima, supreme among those who wield arms, pacified them and made them promise. "You shall never do violence to humans here. Those who perform violence will quickly die the same way." O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On hearing his words, the rakshasas gave the desired promise and accepted the terms. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! From that day, the rakshasas there were friendly and behaved peacefully when they were sighted in town by the inhabitants of that town. Then, unobserved by anyone, Bhima took the dead maneater and placed him at one of the gates. He then went away.

'After killing him,[24] Bhima returned to the Brahmana's house and described in detail to the king[25] all that had happened. The next morning, the inhabitants of the town came out and saw the rakshasa lying dead on the ground, his body wet with blood,

horrible and spread out, as huge as the peak of a mountain. They went to Ekachakra and spread the news throughout the city. O king! In their thousands, the citizens went with their wives, old people and the young to see Baka. They were astonished at the sight of this superhuman feat. O ruler of the earth! They gave offerings of gratitude to the gods. Then they began to calculate whose turn it had been the previous day to supply food. Learning that it was the Brahmana's turn, they went to him and questioned him.

'Thus repeatedly asked, the bull among Brahmanas then protected the Pandavas, but told the citizens everything else. "When I was ordered to supply the food, I was weeping with my family, when a great-souled Brahmana, learned in the mantras, saw me. He asked me about the cause and learnt about the calamity that had befallen this city. That best among Brahmanas then reassured us and smilingly comforted us. He said that he would himself carry the food to the evil-hearted one and that we should not be frightened for his sake. After taking the food, he set out for the forest where Baka lived. For the welfare of the worlds, he must have been the one who performed this deed." Thereupon, all the astonished and delighted Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras had a feast in honour of the Brahmana. All the inhabitants of the country came to the city to witness this extraordinary miracle. Pritha's sons went on living there.'

# Section Eleven

## Chaitraratha Parva

*This parva has 557 shlokas and twenty-one chapters.*

*Chapter 153: 12 shlokas*
*Chapter 154: 25 shlokas*
*Chapter 155: 52 shlokas*
*Chapter 156: 11 shlokas*
*Chapter 157: 16 shlokas*
*Chapter 158: 55 shlokas*
*Chapter 159: 22 shlokas*
*Chapter 160: 41 shlokas*
*Chapter 161: 20 shlokas*
*Chapter 162: 18 shlokas*
*Chapter 163: 23 shlokas*
*Chapter 164: 14 shlokas*
*Chapter 165: 44 shlokas*
*Chapter 166: 45 shlokas*
*Chapter 167: 21 shlokas*
*Chapter 168: 25 shlokas*
*Chapter 169: 25 shlokas*
*Chapter 170: 21 shlokas*
*Chapter 171: 26 shlokas*
*Chapter 172: 17 shlokas*
*Chapter 173: 24 shlokas*

*The parva is named after Chitraratha, a gandharva, whose stories figure in this section.*

153

Janamejaya said, 'O Brahmana! After killing the demon named Baka, what did the Pandavas, those tigers among men, do?'

Vaishampayana said, 'O king! After killing the demon named Baka, they lived in the house of that Brahmana, engaging themselves in studies about the supreme brahman. A few days later, a Brahmana who was rigid in the practice of his vows came to live in that Brahmana's house. That learned bull among Brahmanas, always hospitable towards guests, duly worshipped him and gave him a place to live in his house. Then those bulls among men, the Pandavas, and Kunti, requested the Brahmana to tell them about his wonderful experiences. He told them about many countries, places of pilgrimage, rivers, many kings and many wonderful cities.

'O Janamejaya! When these accounts were over, the Brahmana told them about the wonderful svayamvara[1] of Yajnasena's[2] daughter in the land of Panchala and the births of Dhrishtadyumna and Shikhandi and also that of Krishna,[3] who was born from

Drupada's great sacrifice and not from any woman's womb. Hearing of these wonderful events that had happened in this world, those bulls among men[4] asked the great-souled one[5] to narrate these accounts in greater detail. "How did Drupada's son, Dhrishtadyumna's birth take place from the fire? How did Krishna's wonderful birth take place from the middle of the altar? How did he[6] learn the usage of all weapons from the great archer Drona? How did the great friendship between those two[7] break up?" O king! Having been thus asked by those bulls among men, the Brahmana recounted in detail the story of Droupadi's birth.'

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'The Brahmana said, "At the source of the Ganga, there lived a rishi of great austerities. He was always rigid in his vows and he was extremely wise. His name was Bharadvaja. One day, the rishi went to the Ganga to have his bath and saw there the apsara Ghritachi, who had arrived before him and now stood there, having finished her bath. Then a wind arose from the riverbank and removed the clothing from her body. Seeing her nude, the rishi was afflicted with desire. He had been celibate[8] since boyhood. As soon as his mind felt desire, his semen dropped and the rishi collected it in a wooden cup.[9] From that was born a son, who became the learned Drona and who studied all the Vedas and the Vedangas.

'"Bharadvaja had a king as his friend. His name was Prishata and he had a son named Drupada. Parshata,[10] that bull among Kshatriyas, always used to go to the hermitage and play and study with Drona. After Prishata died, Drupada became the king. Drona heard that Rama[11] wanted to give away all his riches. When Rama was leaving for the forest,[12] Bharadvaja's son went to him and said, 'O bull among Brahmanas! I am Drona and I have come to you for some riches.' Rama said, 'O Brahmana! Now I have only my body left. Ask for either my body or my weapons.' Drona said, 'O illustrious one! Give me all your weapons, together with the knowledge of releasing them and recalling them.' The descendant of Bhrigu[13] agreed and gave those to him. On receiving them, Drona concluded that he had become successful. On obtaining from Rama that supreme weapon known as brahmastra, Drona became extremely happy and became supreme among men. Thereupon, Bharadvaja's powerful son went to Drupada, a tiger among men, and said, 'Know me to be your friend.' Drupada said, 'A man without learning cannot be a friend to one who is learned, nor one without chariots to one who has chariots, nor one who is not a king to one who is a king. Why do you desire our old friendship?' Turning his mind against the king of Panchala, the intelligent one[14] went to Nagasahrya,[15] the capital of the Kurus.

'"Thereupon, Bhishma took a lot of riches with him and offered his grandsons to the wise Drona as students. With the intention of humiliating Drupada, Drona assembled all his students and told them, 'O unblemished ones! When you have become skilled in the use of all weapons, as a preceptor's fee, you must promise that you will give me what I wish for.' When the Pandavas became skilled in the use of all weapons and became successful in their labour, Drona spoke to them and reminded them about the preceptor's fee, 'Parshata Drupada is the king in Chhatravati.[16] Take his kingdom away from him and give it to me quickly.' Then Pandu's five sons defeated Drupada in battle. Taking him and his advisers prisoners, they showed them to Drona. Drona said, 'O king of men! I again seek your friendship. One who is not a king cannot be a friend to one who is a king. O Yajnasena! Therefore, I will divide the kingdom with you. You will be the king on the southern banks of the Bhagirathi and I on the north.' The thought of that great insult never left the king's[17] mind for a single instant. Being miserable, the king became thin."'

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'The Brahmana said, "Being miserable, King Drupada wandered in many places where Brahmanas lived, searching for bulls among Brahmanas who were perfect in all the rites.[18] He wished for the birth of a son. Afflicted with grief and out of his mind, he always thought, 'I don't have excellent offspring.' When his sons were born, he said, 'Cursed are my relatives[19] who are without learning.' He kept on sighing, thinking about taking revenge on Drona."

'O descendant of the Bharata lineage! But however much that best among kings tried, he could think of no means to overcome Drona's influence, humility, learning and accomplishments through his Kshatriya powers. Wandering around, the king came to a holy hermitage of Brahmanas located on the banks of the Ganga. There was no Brahmana there who was not rigid in his vows, nor one who was not a *snataka*.[20] Prishata's son found two brahmarshis named Yaja and Upayaja there. They were greatly illustrious, rigid in their vows, self-controlled and given to the study of the samhitas. They were descended from Kashyapa's lineage and both of those supreme Brahmanas were capable of rescuing him.[21] Having controlled his mind, he served them in every possible way. Knowing the strength of the younger one to be greater, he worshipped Upayaja of rigid vows, giving him every object of desire, serving at his feet and addressing him in pleasant words.

'Worshipping him in accordance with the prescribed rites, he told Upayaja, "O Brahmana! O Upayaja! If you perform the sacrifice that will give me a son who can kill Drona, I will give you ten crore[22]cows. O best of the Brahmanas! I will give you whatever else is in your mind and whatever pleases you. There is no doubt about this."

Having been thus addressed, the rishi refused. Thereupon, Drupada again began to worship him and serve him. O king! After one year had passed and at the right time, Upayaja, best of the Brahmanas, spoke to the king in gentle words, "When roaming in a forest and at a waterfall, my elder brother picked up a fruit that had fallen on the ground, not knowing that it was impure and should be discarded. I was following him and witnessed my brother's impure act. He never has scruples about taking that which is unclean. He did not see the impurities that were on the fruit. One who does not see impurities in one's acts, is not expected to see it in another. When he was in his preceptor's house and was studying the samhitas, without any scruples he used to eat the leftover food of others and repeatedly praise its qualities. Judging from this, my brother desires material fruit. O king! Go to him and he will perform your sacrifices." Hearing Upayaja's words and thinking about them, the king, who was well versed in the ways of dharma, went to Yaja, though he had a low opinion of him.

'Worshipping the rishi who was deserving of worship, he told Yaja, "O lord! I will give you 80,000 cows. Please perform the sacrifice. I am inflamed with enmity for Drona. Pacify my heart. That best of men is learned in the Vedas and is skilled in the use of brahmastra. Therefore, Drona defeated me in a quarrel that arose over our friendship. There is no Kshatriya on this earth, however great, who is superior to him and that wise son of Bharadvaja has become the chief preceptor of the Kurus. Drona's net of arrows can kill every living creature. His bow is 6 cubits long and looks great and matchless. That great-minded and great archer, Bharadvaja's son, is undoubtedly capable of destroying the might of Kshatriyas with the might of a Brahmana. He has been created like another son of Jamadagni[23] to destroy the Kshatriyas. There is no man on earth who can withstand the terrible power of his weapons. Like a blazing fire that has been fed with sacrificial offerings, Drona's Brahmana powers consume every Kshatriya power in battle. Though his Brahmana powers are combined with Kshatriya powers, your Brahmana powers are superior to his. I am inferior because I only possess Kshatriya powers. Give me your Brahmana powers. I have now found you, whose Brahmana powers are superior to Drona's. O Yaja! Perform the sacrifice so that I obtain a son who will be invincible and can kill Drona. I will give you ten crore[24] cows." Yaja agreed and began to think of what was required for the sacrifice.

'Upayaja wished for no rewards, but was called to assist his elder. Then Yaja promised Drona's destruction. The great ascetic Upayaja instructed the king of men[25] on the sacrificial rites that would produce a son. "O king! According to your desires, a son will be born to you, who will possess great valour, great energy and great strength." King Drupada, wishing to obtain a son who would kill Bharadvaja's son, began to make the required preparations for bringing success to his effort. Yaja poured offerings into the sacrificial fire and instructed the queen, "O queen Prishati! Come here. The time for

uniting has arrived."[26] The queen said, "O Brahmana! My face is anointed with divine scents. O Yaja! Wait a little. My body is not yet ready for the happy consummation that will give a son." Yaja said, "Offerings made sacred by Upayaja's incantations have already been prepared by Yaja. Why should the object of this sacrifice not be attained, whether you come or wait?" Saying this, Yaja poured the sanctified sacrificial offerings into the fire.

'Then a youth who resembled a god arose from the flames. His complexion was like the fire and his form was terrible. He wore a crown on his head and his body was encased in excellent armour. He had a sword in his hand and a bow and arrows and he let out many loud roars. As soon as he was born, he ascended a supreme chariot and went forth. All the Panchalas were delighted and exclaimed, "Blessed!" From the sky issued the voice of an invisible and great being. "This terrible prince has been born for Drona's destruction. He will increase the fame of the Panchalas and remove the king's grief." Then a young maiden arose from the centre of the altar. She was blessed with good fortune and was known as Panchali. She was beautiful and her waist was shaped like an altar. She was dark. Her eyes were like the petals of lotuses. Her hair was dark blue and curled. She was truly a goddess born in human form. The sweet fragrance of blue lotuses emanated from her body, a full 2 miles[27] away. Her form and supreme beauty were such that she had no equal on earth. When the one with beautiful hips was born, the invisible voice said, "Supreme among women, this beauty of the dark complexion will bring about the destruction of the Kshatriyas. In time, this one with the beautiful waist will perform the objective of the gods. From her will arise terrible fear among the Kshatriyas." Hearing this, all the Panchalas roared like a pride of lions. The earth was unable to bear their great joy.

'On seeing these two, Prishati wished to get them and came to Yaja and said, "Let these two know no one but me as their mother." Desiring to please the king, Yaja agreed. The Brahmanas, whose desires were entirely satisfied, gave the two names. "Because of his great courage and because he has been born from lustre, let this son of Drupada be called Dhrishtadyumna.[28] Because she is dark in complexion, let her be called Krishna." Thus Drupada's twin children were born from the great sacrifice. Bharadvaja's powerful son[29] took the Panchala prince Dhrishtadyumna to his own house and taught him the use of all weapons. Thus did the illustrious Drona ensure that his own deeds would become famous, because the immensely wise one knew that what was destined would come to be.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'On hearing this, Kunti's sons seemed to be pierced with spears. All those maharathas lost their mental peace. On seeing that her sons were confused and

not in control of their senses, the truthful Kunti spoke to Yudhishthira.

'Kunti said, "We have lived in this Brahmana's house for many nights. O Yudhishthira! We have lived in this beautiful city and have received alms. O chastiser of enemies! We have seen again and again all the beautiful forests and woods. Seeing them again will not give us any pleasure. O brave descendant of Kuru! Alms will not be as easily available. O fortunate one! If you wish, let us go to Panchala. O son! We have not seen it before and it must be beautiful. O destroyer of enemies! It has been heard that alms are easily obtained in Panchala and that King Yajnasena himself is devoted to Brahmanas. It is my view that one should not live in the same place for a long time. O son! Therefore, if you also think the same, let us go there." Yudhishthira said, "Your views are for our welfare and we should act in that way. But I don't know if my younger brothers will wish to go." Then Kunti spoke to Bhimasena, Arjuna and the twins about going there, and all of them agreed.

'O king! Kunti and her sons saluted the Brahmana and left for the beautiful city of the great-hearted Drupada.'

## 157

Vaishampayana said, 'When the great-hearted Pandavas lived in disguise, Vyasa, Satyavati's son, once came to see them. On seeing him come, those scorchers of enemies advanced to meet him. They prostrated themselves to welcome him and stood before him with folded hands. Returning their greetings, and worshipped and pleased by Pritha's sons, the sage spoke to them in affectionate words, after they were all seated, "O scorchers of enemies! Do you follow the path of dharma and that laid down in the sacred texts? Do you worship the Brahmanas and those who deserve worship?" The illustrious rishi uttered many words about dharma and artha.

'Speaking about many subjects, he again said, "A great-souled rishi lived in a hermitage. He had a daughter who was slender of waist and wide of hips. Her eyebrows were beautiful and she had all the qualities. Because of her earlier deeds,[30] she was unfortunate. Despite being beautiful and pure, that girl did not get a husband. With sorrow in her heart, she then began to perform austerities so as to obtain a husband. She satisfied Shankara with her severe austerities. Gratified, the illustrious lord spoke to the ascetic lady. "O fortunate one! O beautiful one! Ask for a boon and I shall give it to you." Desirous of ensuring her own welfare, she repeatedly told the supreme god, "I want a husband with all the qualities." Then the eloquent Ishana[31] Shankara told her, "O fortunate one! You will have five husbands." Thus addressed, she told Shankara, "Give me only one husband." The god addressed her again in these excellent words, "You have repeatedly asked me for a husband five times. Therefore, when you are reborn in another body, it shall be as I have just said." That daughter of divine form was born in Drupada's family, as the unblemished Krishna Parshati and is destined to be

your wife. O mighty ones! Go to the city of Panchala. There is no doubt that you will be happy in obtaining her as your wife.” Having told the Pandavas this, the greatly fortunate grandfather,[32] the great ascetic, bid his farewell to Kunti and Pritha’s sons and left.’

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Vaishampayana said, ‘Placing their mother ahead of them, those bulls among men, the scorchers of enemies, set out over smooth roads towards the north, as they had been directed. They walked day and night and reached the pilgrimage of Somashravayana. Pandu’s sons, those tigers among men, reached the Ganga. The immensely famous Dhananjaya[33] walked in front, with a torch in his hand to show the way and protect them.

‘In the beautiful waters of the Ganga, the jealous king of the gandharvas was sporting with his wives. He heard the sound[34] as they approached the river. That strong one was inflamed with rage at the sound. Seeing the Pandavas, the scorchers of enemies, and their mother, he drew his terrible bow and uttered these words. “It is known that except for the first eighty instants,[35] when terrible dusk colours and night is about to descend, the rest[36] is set aside for yakshas, gandharvas, rakshasas and others who can travel wherever at will. For the rest of the time, it is said that humans can travel at will. Therefore, if at those times, men wander around out of greed, we and the rakshasas attack and kill those stupid ones. Those who are learned in the Vedas disapprove of those men, even if they are kings with their armies, who come near the water in the night. Stay at a distance and do not come near me. Do you not know that I am bathing in the waters of the Bhagirathi? Know me to be the gandharva named Angaraparna. I rely on my own strength. I am proud and jealous and I am Kubera’s beloved friend. This is my beautiful forest on the banks of the Ganga, known as Angaraparna. I dwell here. No corpses,[37] horned animals, gods or humans dare to set foot here. How dare you come?”

‘Arjuna said, “O evil-minded one! Whether it is night or day or twilight, how can the ocean, the Himalayas or this river be barred to anyone? We are endowed with strength. We do not care even if we disturb you at the wrong time. It is only weak men who worship you in this cruel hour. Issuing from the golden peaks of the Himalayas, this Ganga descends into the ocean in seven streams. O gandharva! This holy Ganga, flowing through the celestial regions, is known there as Alakananda. In the region of the ancestors, it is known as Vaitarani and cannot be crossed by those who commit sins. Krishna Dvaipayana has said that this divine and pure river, which can take one to heaven, is accessible to everyone. How can you bar us access? That is not in accordance with eternal dharma. Because of your words, why should we not touch, as we will, the

sacred waters of the Bhagirathi, accessible to everyone?"'

Vaishampayana said, 'Hearing these words, Angaraparna became very angry. He drew his bow and shot flaming arrows that were like extremely venomous snakes. With the torch in his hand, Pandava Dhananjaya warded off the arrows with his excellent shield. Arjuna said, "O gandharva! Don't try to frighten those who are skilled in the use of weapons, because weapons unleashed at them disappear like froth. O gandharva! I know that gandharvas are superior to men. Therefore, I will fight you with divine weapons, not with the use of maya. In ancient times, this agneya missile was given by Brihaspati, Shatakratu's[38] preceptor, to Bharadvaja. From Bharadvaja it went to Agniveshya and from Agniveshya to my preceptor. Drona, supreme among Brahmanas, gave it to me." Having said this, the angry Pandava unleashed the blazing agneya weapon at the gandharva and it instantly burnt down his chariot. Knocked unconscious from the energy of the missile, the immensely powerful gandharva fell face down, dislodged from his chariot. Dhananjaya seized him by the hair on his head, which was adorned with garlands, and dragged the one knocked unconscious from the missile towards his brothers. On seeing this, his wife, who was named Kumbhinasi, sought refuge with Yudhishthira so that her husband might be saved.

'The gandharva woman said, "O great king! Save me and set my husband free. O lord! The gandharvi Kumbhinasi seeks your protection." Yudhishthira said, "O destroyer of enemies! Which hero will kill an enemy who has been defeated in battle, has lost his fame and is now protected by a woman? Set him free." Arjuna said, "O gandharva! Have your life. Go from here and do not grieve. Yudhishthira, king of the Kurus,[39] has ordered safety for you today."

'The gandharva said, "I have been defeated by you. Therefore, I will give up my earlier name of Angaraparna. Among men, I can no longer show my pride in strength or in name. I wanted to fight, with the powers of maya of the gandharvas, with someone who was at the peak of his youth. It is my good fortune that I encountered one with celestial weapons. My supreme and adorned chariot has been burnt by the agneya weapon. I was earlier called Chitraratha[40] and have now become Dagdharatha.[41] I spoke to you about the knowledge that I earlier attained through austerities. Today, I will give it to the great-souled one who has granted me life. He who saves the life of a vanquished enemy who seeks sanctuary deserves good fortune. This knowledge is called *chakshushi*.[42] It was given by Manu to Soma and Soma gave it to Vishvavasu. Vishvavasu gave it to me.

'"When the preceptor gives the knowledge to a coward, it is destroyed. I have spoken to you about its origin and transmission. Now learn from me its power. Whatever you wish to see through your eyes in all the three worlds will be seen by you, exactly as you wish. One can acquire this knowledge by standing on one leg for six months. I have

given word that I will myself bestow this knowledge on you. O king! It is because of this knowledge that we are superior to men. Because we have the power of seeing everything, we are the equals of the gods. O best of men! I wish to give each of you five brothers, separately, 100 horses from the land of the gandharvas. They are divinely scented and possess the speed of the mind. They are used to transport the gods and the gandharvas. However tired they are, they never lose their speed. In ancient times, the great Indra created the vajra to kill Vritra. But it shattered into a thousand pieces when flung on Vritra's head. Since then, the gods divided the vajra pieces among themselves and worshipped them. Whatever is known as wealth in this world is but a piece of that vajra. The hands of Brahmanas are the vajra. The chariots of Kshatriyas are the vajra. The alms of the Vaishyas are the vajra. The servitude of the Shudras[43] is the vajra. The horses of the Kshatriyas are the vajra and it is said that they should never be killed. The horses that draw chariots are the offspring of vadava.[44] One who drives horses is called a suta. These[45] can assume any colour at will, can assume any speed at will and can go anywhere at will. These horses from the gandharva region will always fulfil any desire."

'Arjuna said, "O gandharva! I have no desire to accept the knowledge or the riches if you are giving them to me out of satisfaction at my having saved your life."

'The gandharva said, "An encounter with a great person is always a matter of satisfaction. In addition to that, you have given me my life. Being pleased with you, I am giving you the knowledge. O bull among the Bharata lineage! O Bibhatsu![46] In return, to make it equal, I shall take from you the supreme agneya weapon,[47] so that our friendship is eternal."

Arjuna said, "O gandharva! I shall accept your horses in return for my weapon. Let our friendship be eternal. O friend! Tell me how we can be free from the danger from your race."'

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'Arjuna said, "O gandharva! We are the chastisers of enemies. We are learned in the Vedas. We are all virtuous. Yet, why did you abuse us when we were travelling in the night?"

'The gandharva said, "O son of Pandu! You do not keep the fire.[48] You do not make sacrificial offerings. You do not have Brahmanas walking ahead of you. That is the reason you were abused by me. The yakshas, the rakshasas, the gandharvas, the pishachas, the uragas and men speak in detail about the prosperity of the Kuru dynasty. O brave one! I have heard Narada and other devarshis speak of the qualities and wisdom of your ancestors. When I myself roamed this rich earth that has this ocean as a garment, I saw the influence of your dynasty. O Arjuna! I personally know your preceptor in knowledge of the Vedas and the science of weapons, Bharadvaja's famous

son. He is revered in the three worlds. O Partha! O tiger among the Kurus! I also know Dharma, Vayu, Shakra,[49] the Ashvins and Pandu, the six who extended this lineage. These best of gods and men are your ancestors. I know that all you brothers are divine-minded, great-souled, supreme among those who wield arms, excellent in observance of vows, supreme in mind and intelligence and perfect in character. O Partha! Nevertheless, I abused you. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! No man who has the strength of his arms can patiently tolerate abuse before his wife's eyes. O son of Kunti! Especially at night, our strength increases. Since I was with my wife, I was filled with anger.

'"O extender of Tapati's lineage! I was defeated by you in battle. Hear from me the reason why I suffered. O Partha! Brahmacharya is the supreme dharma and you are established in that. That is the reason you defeated me in the battle. O chastiser of enemies! If any Kshatriya, driven by desire, wishes to fight with us in the night, he can never escape alive. O descendant of Tapati's lineage! However, a king, driven by desire, can vanquish all the wanderers of the night in battle if he is led by a priest. O descendant of Tapati's lineage! Therefore, men should always employ priests who are learned and self-controlled in all acts that are desired. He who is learned in the six Vedangas, and is always pure, truthful, devoted to dharma and self-controlled, is fit to be a priest for kings. A king who has a priest who is learned in the precepts of dharma, eloquent, well behaved and pure ahead of him is always victorious and is assured of heaven afterwards. A king must always choose a priest who has all the qualities, who can protect what he possesses and acquire that which he does not. A king should always be guided by his priest to acquire the entire earth, from Mount Meru to where the ocean is the garment. O descendant of Tapati's lineage! A king who is without a Brahmana can never acquire any land through his bravery or high birth alone. O extender of the Kuru lineage! Therefore, know that kingdoms with Brahmanas at their head can be sustained eternally."'

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'Arjuna said, "You have addressed me as the descendant of Tapati. Therefore, I wish to know what that precisely means. O blessed one! We are the sons of Kunti and are known as Kounteya. Who is Tapati and why are we called Tapatya?[50] I wish to know."'

Vaishampayana said, 'Having been thus addressed by Kunti's son Dhananjaya, the gandharva recounted the story that is famous in the three worlds.

'The gandharva said, "O Partha! O chief among those who follow dharma! I will tell you this virtuous and wonderful story exactly as it happened. Listen attentively to what I have to say and you will understand the reason why I have called you Tapatya. He who pervades the entire firmament[51] with his energy had a daughter named Tapati

who was equal to him. Tapati was born to Vivasvat[52] after Savitri and was famous in the three worlds because of her austerities. There was no one equal to her in beauty among the gods, the asuras, the yakshas, the rakshasas, the apsaras and the gandharvas. She was symmetrical in form and unblemished in features. She had large and black eyes. She was dressed in beautiful garments. She was pure in conduct. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On seeing her, Vivasvat thought that no one in the three worlds possessed beauty, conduct, learning and qualities equal to her so as to be her husband. On seeing that his daughter had grown and attained the age of marriage, he had no peace of mind, thinking about whom to give her to.

'"O Kounteya! The mighty King Samvarana, the son of Riksha and a bull among the Kurus, always used to worship the sun, with offerings and garlands, observing fasts and rituals and practising various austerities. Puru's descendant worshipped Anshuman[53] when he arose, with devotion, obedience, selflessness and purity. On seeing that Samvarana was learned in the path of dharma and was unparalleled on earth for his handsomeness, Surya decided that he was the best husband for Tapati. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! Surya desired to give his daughter to that supreme king, whose lineage was famous. Just as the blazing rays of the sun suffuse the sky with radiance, King Samvarana filled the earth with his splendour. O Partha! Just as those who know the brahman worship the rising sun, all subjects other than Brahmanas worshipped Samvarana. The fortunate king surpassed the moon in benevolence towards those who wished him well and the sun in scorching those who wished him ill. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! Tapan[54] himself decided that Tapati should be given to a king who had such great virtue and qualities.

'"O Partha! It is told that once the king, blessed with such great good fortune and immensely famous on earth, went out to hunt in the woods on the slopes of a mountain. O son of Kunti! When he was hunting, his unequalled horse, overcome with hunger and thirst, died on that mountain. O Partha! Abandoning the dead horse, the king walked on that mountain on foot and saw a lady who had large eyes and was unrivalled in the worlds in beauty. That scorcher of enemies, a tiger among kings, was alone. That lady was also alone. He stood motionless and stared at her with an unwavering gaze. From her beauty, the king thought that she might be the goddess Shri.[55] He again thought that her beauty was the manifestation of the sun's rays on earth. The black-eyed lady stood on the mountain slope, with its trees and creepers, like a statue of gold. Having seen her, the king became contemptuous of all other beings and considered that his eyes had now accomplished their purpose. The king thought that nothing that he had seen from the date of his birth could rival her beauty. He thought that the creator had created the beauty of this large-eyed lady after churning the worlds of gods, asuras and men. The king's heart and mind were tied up in the noose of her perfection. Deprived of his

senses, he was rooted to the spot. Thus, King Samvarana then decided that the lady's richness of beauty was unmatched in the three worlds.

'"As soon as he had seen that fortunate one, the king of noble lineage was pierced by the arrows of the god of love and began to worry. Burning with the fierce fire of desire, he spoke to the illustrious lady, who was an adult, but was still innocent, 'O lady with thighs like that of a plantain tree![56] Who are you? Who do you belong to? Why have you come here? O lady with the beautiful smile! Why are you wandering alone in this lonely forest? You are unblemished in every limb and adorned in every ornament. You are like a coveted ornament to those ornaments themselves. You don't seem to be a goddess or an asuri, or a yakshi or a rakshasi, or a nagini or a gandharvi, or a human. O supreme among beautiful ones! None of the beautiful women I have seen, or heard of, can match you.' Thus, struck by desire, did the ruler of the earth then speak to her in the lonely forest.

'"But she did not utter a word in reply. When the king kept asking, the large-eyed lady vanished like a flash of lightning. Like one who had lost his senses, the king wandered around in the forest, looking for the lady with eyes like a lotus. Having failed to find her, that best of the Kuru lineage lamented a lot and for a long time remained motionless in grief."'

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'The gandharva said, "When she disappeared, the king, the one who caused the downfall of enemy armies, was struck by desire and fell down on the ground. On his falling down on the ground, the one with the beautiful smile and swelling and rounded hips appeared once again before the king. In a gentle voice, the fortunate beauty then spoke to the king, the extender of the Kuru lineage who had lost his senses because of desire, 'O tiger among kings! O fortunate one! O scorcher of enemies! You are known in the world. You should not be seen in loss of your senses. Arise! Arise!' Having heard these sweet words, the king looked up and saw standing before him the lady with the wide hips.

'"The ruler of men then addressed the black-eyed one in these words, his heart burning with the fire of desire and his words weak with emotion, 'O black-eyed lady! O fortunate one! I am burning with desire. O lady with the large eyes! I am seeking you. Accept me in return, because my life is ebbing away because of you. O you whose complexion is like the inside of a lotus! Love's sharp arrows never stop piercing me. O fortunate one! The god of love has bitten me like a large snake. O one with the unblemished face! O one with the tapering thighs! O one with a voice like the song of the kinnaras! My life is in your hands. O one with unblemished and beautiful limbs! O one with a face like a lotus or the moon! O bashful one! I shall certainly not be able to live without you. O lady with the large eyes! O black-eyed one! You should not forsake me. O beautiful one! You must save me with your affection. O beautiful and timid one! O one with thighs like

a plantain tree! Marry me according to the gandharva rites, because among all forms of marriage, the gandharva is said to be the best.'

'"Tapati said, 'O king! I am not in control of myself. I am a daughter under a father's superintendence. If you really seek pleasure from me, go and ask my father for me. O ruler of men! You say that I have robbed you of your life. But know that at the first sight, you have also robbed me of my life. O best of kings! I am not the mistress of my own body. Therefore, I cannot come to you. Women are always dependent. But is there any woman in the three worlds who will not desire a husband like you, who has a noble lineage and is always benevolent to his dependants? Therefore, since the time is right, ask for me from my father Aditya, with reverence, austerities and rituals. O destroyer of enemies! O king! If he desires to give me to you, I shall always be under your superintendence. O bull among the Kshatriyas! I am Tapati, Savitri's youngest sister. I am the daughter of Savitar,[57] who is a torch to the worlds.'"'

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'The gandharva said, "Having said this, the unblemished one swiftly rose up into the sky. The king once more fell down on the ground. Searching for that supreme among kings, his minister and attendants found him in that state in the great forest, prone on the ground like Shakra's flag when the season is right.[58] On seeing the great archer prone on the ground and without a horse, the minister was burnt, as if by a fire. Drawing quickly near, the minister raised the king, who was lying senseless on the ground in the affliction of desire, affectionately and reverently, just as a father raises a fallen son. This minister was old in age, wisdom, fame and deeds. When he had raised him and senses were recovered, the minister addressed him in sweet and benevolent words, 'O tiger among men! Do not be frightened. O unblemished one! You will be blessed.' The minister thought that the king, the destroyer of hostile armies in battle, had been lying down on the ground because he had been overcome with hunger, thirst and exhaustion. He sprinkled cold water, fragrant with the scent of lotuses, on the king's head, but without touching the crown. Thereupon, the powerful king regained his consciousness. He then sent away all his attendants, except the minister.

'"When that large retinue had gone away on the king's instructions, the king again sat down on that mountain plain. Then, on that great mountain, the king purified himself and joined his palms. He raised his arms up and worshipped the sun. King Samvarana, destroyer of enemies, also mentally thought of his priest Vashishtha, supreme among rishis. Without a break, the ruler of men remained there for days and nights. Then, on the twelfth day, the brahmarshi[59] came to him. Through his power of austerities, the great rishi who was self-controlled knew that, as decreed by destiny, the king's heart had been stolen by Tapati. Then the best of sages, who was rigid in his vows, wished to bring good fortune to the virtuous king and assured him. As the ruler of men watched,

the illustrious rishi ascended the sky to meet the sun, as radiant himself as that blazing one. With his palms joined, the Brahmana joyfully introduced himself to the one with a thousand rays and said, 'I am Vashishtha.' Then the immensely radiant Vivasvat[60] said to the best of sages, 'O maharshi! You are welcome. Tell me what you desire.'"'

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'"Vashishtha said, 'O Vibhavasu![61] On Samvarana's behalf, I have come to ask you for your daughter Tapati, Savitri's younger sister. He is a mighty king with great deeds. He is great-souled and is well versed in dharma and artha. O traveller in the sky! Samvarana is a fit husband for your daughter.'"

'The gandharva said, "Hearing these words, Savita[62] decided on giving her. Divakara[63] saluted the Brahmana and said, 'O sage! Samvarana is the best among kings and you are the best among rishis. Tapati is the best of women. Why give her somewhere else?' Thereupon, Tapana[64] himself gave the unblemished and perfect Tapati to the great-souled Vashishtha, for Samvarana's sake. The maharshi accepted the lady Tapati and taking his leave, Vashishtha returned to where the bull among the Kurus and the one with famous deeds was seated. The king was possessed by love and his heart was fixed on her. He became extremely glad when he saw that Vashishtha was leading the divine maiden Tapati, the one with a beautiful smile, towards him. The illustrious rishi Vashishtha, pure of spirit, came to the king when he had completed the twelfth night of his vows. Thus Samvarana obtained his wife through austerities and worship of the Lord Gopati[65] and Vashishtha's energy. That bull among men accepted Tapati's hand on that best of mountains, frequented by gods and gandharvas, in accordance with the prescribed rituals.

'"With Vashishtha's permission, the rajarshi[66] desired to sport with his wife on that mountain. He then instructed his minister to rule over his city, kingdom, mounts and armies. Bidding farewell to the king, Vashishtha left. The king sported on that mountain like a god. The king pleasured with his wife in the groves and streams of that mountain for twelve years. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! For those twelve years, the one with a thousand eyes[67] did not pour any rain in the king's city and kingdom. Because of hunger and starvation, the men became like dead bodies. The city looked like a city of the king of the dead, populated by dead people. Then, seeing that condition, the illustrious rishi Vashishtha, learned in dharma, went to the supreme among kings.[68] O king! He brought back the tiger-like king, who had been away from his city for twelve years, together with Tapati. When that tiger among kings entered the city again, the slayer of demons[69] poured down rain, as before. Thus, enervated by that foremost among kings, who had himself enervated his soul, the city and the kingdom became

extremely happy. With his wife Tapati, the king performed sacrifices for twelve years, like Shakra,[70] lord of the maruts.

'"O Partha! This is the story of the greatly fortunate Tapati of ancient times. She was the daughter of Vivasvat and it is after her that you are named Tapatya. O Arjuna! O greatest among those who scorch! On Tapati, King Samvarana had a son named Kuru. Born in that lineage of Tapati, you are known as Tapatya."'

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Vaishampayana said, 'Hearing the gandharva's words, the bull of the Bharata lineage, Arjuna, shone with joy, like the full moon. His curiosity was excited by what he had heard about Vashishtha's ascetic powers. The best of the Kurus, the great archer, spoke to the gandharva, "I wish to hear the story of the rishi whom you have referred to as Vashishtha. Tell me in detail. O lord of the gandharvas! Tell me who this illustrious rishi, the priest of our ancestors, was."

'The gandharva said, "Desire and anger, which even the gods find difficult to conquer, were overcome through his[71] austerities and washed his feet. Though the supreme sage's wrath was stirred at Vishvamitra's evil deed, he was noble enough not to annihilate the Kushikas.[72] Though he mourned the death of his sons, and had the power to do so, he did not perform any terrible deed to destroy Vishvamitra. Like the great ocean does not cross its shoreline, he did not transgress Yama's law by bringing his sons back from the land of the dead. Obtaining this great-souled and self-controlled supreme rishi Vashishtha as their priest, Ikshvaku and other kings conquered the entire earth. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! These kings performed many sacrifices. O best of the Pandavas! This brahmarshi was the priest for those excellent kings, like Brihaspati was for the gods.

'"Therefore, look for a Brahmana in whose heart dharma is supreme, who is learned in the Vedas and in dharma and who has all the qualities, and appoint him as your priest. O Partha! A Kshatriya of noble birth who wishes to conquer the earth must first appoint a priest to be in front, so that the kingdom flourishes. A king who wishes to conquer the earth must have a Brahmana before him. Therefore, let a Brahmana who has all the qualities be your priest."'

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'Arjuna said, "How did the hostility between Vashishtha and Vishvamitra, both of whom lived in divine hermitages, arise? Tell us in detail."

'The gandharva said, "O Partha! Vashishtha's account is known as a purana in all the worlds. Listen to me as I recount it in its entirety. O bull of the Bharata lineage! There was a great king in Kanyakubja. He was known in the world as Gadhi and he was

devoted to true dharma. His virtuous son, a conqueror of enemies, was known by the name of Vishvamitra and he had many armies and mounts. With his ministers, he used to wander in deep forests and beautiful wildernesses, to hunt deer and boar. Once, tired and exhausted from pursuit of a deer, that best of men came to Vashishtha's hermitage. On seeing him come, the fortunate and illustrious rishi, Vashishtha, offered homage to Vishvamitra, the best of men. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! He welcomed him and offered him water to wash his feet and face and gave him offerings of forest fare.

'"The great-souled Vashishtha possessed a kamadhenu. When she was asked to give, she produced whatever was desired. O Arjuna! She yielded products of villages and forests, herbs, milk, juices with six different flavours[73] that tasted like ambrosia itself, and different types of food that could be chewed, drunk, eaten, licked and sucked, all tasting like ambrosia. The king was honoured with everything that he desired, in abundant measure. He, his ministers and his entourage were greatly satisfied. With great surprise, he[74] saw Vashishtha's beautiful and unblemished cow, named Nandini[75]—six measures long, three measures wide and five measures around, with beautiful flanks and thighs, with eyes prominent like those of frogs, with a beautiful carriage, large udders, beautiful tail, uplifted and straight ears, handsome horns and a well-developed head and neck. O king! Gadhi's son was gratified with what he saw and saluted the cow. The king[76] then spoke to the rishi,[77] 'O Brahmana! O great sage! Give me Nandini in exchange for my kingdom or for 10,000 cows. Enjoy the kingdom.' Vashishtha said, 'O unblemished king! I keep this milk-yielding cow for the sake of the gods, ancestors, guests and sacrificial offerings. Nandini cannot be given away, even in exchange for your kingdom.' Vishvamitra said, 'I am a Kshatriya and you are only a Brahmana devoted to studies and austerities. How can there be strength in Brahmanas who are peaceful and control themselves? If you don't give me what I want in exchange for 10,000 cows, I will not give up my own dharma. I will take the cow away by force.' Vashishtha said, 'You are a powerful king with an army with you. You are a Kshatriya with valour in your arms. Do what you wish quickly, and without thinking over it.' O Partha! Thus, addressed, Vishamitra seized the cow Nandini, as translucent as a swan or the moon.

'"He dragged her here and there and beat her with a stick. The blessed Nandini bellowed piteously and came to Vashishtha. O Partha! She stood near the illustrious sage and raised her head up at him. Though she had been beaten a lot, she did not leave the hermitage. Vashishtha said, 'O fortunate Nandini! I hear your repeated cries. But you are being taken away by force. What can a forgiving Brahmana do?' O bull among the Bharata lineage! Frightened by the force of Vishvamitra's army and frightened by Vishvamitra himself, she came closer to Vashishtha. Nandini said, 'O illustrious one! Why do you overlook it when I am beaten by the sticks and lashes of Vishamitra's

fearful army? Why do you orphan me when I am crying?' O Partha! The great sage did not lose his patience. Nor did he deviate from his rigid vows[78] on hearing her cries of suffering. Vashishtha said, 'A Kshatriya's strength is his energy. A Brahmana's strength is his forbearance. I cannot give up forbearance. If you wish, go.' Nandini said, 'O illustrious one! O Brahmana! Are you forsaking me in this way? If you do not forsake me, I cannot be taken away by force.' Vashishtha said, 'O blessed one! I am not forsaking you. Stay, if you can. Tethered with a strong rope, your calf is now being taken away by force.' Hearing him say 'stay', Vashishtha's cow raised up her head and neck and became fearful to look at.

'"Eyes red with anger and with thunderous bellows, she attacked Vishvamitra's army from all sides. Stung with their sticks and lashes and being dragged here and there, her anger increased and her eyes became red with rage. A shower of burning embers was unleashed from her tail. She blazed with anger like the midday sun. She created an army of pahlavas[79] from her tail, an army of shabaras[80] and shakas[81] from her dung and an army of yavanas[82] from her urine. She swooned with anger. From her froth, she produced pundras, kiratas,[83] dramidas,[84] Simhalas,[85] barbaras,[86] daradas[87] and mlecchas.[88] When she had produced these many armies of mlecchas, clad in different types of armour and armed with different types of weapons, before Vishvamitra's own eyes, she scattered with her ferocious troops his large army. Every single one of his soldiers was surrounded by five or seven of hers and with a shower of weapons was dispersed and fled in all directions in panic. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Though greatly enraged, not a single one of Vishvamitra's soldiers was separated from his life by a single one of Vashishtha's. Vishvamitra's army was driven 3 yojanas away and though it cried out in panic, there was no saviour to be found.

'"On seeing this amazing sight born out of a Brahmana's powers, Vishvamitra was disgusted with his Kshatriya powers and said, 'A curse on my Kshatriya powers! The true power is that of a Brahmana. In judging weakness and strength, I see that true strength arises from the power of austerities.' He gave up his prosperous kingdom and his radiant regal fortune. Turning his back on all pleasures, he decided to devote himself to austerities. Through his power of austerities, he became successful and filled the worlds with his radiance. Through all his radiant energy, he became a Brahmana and Kushika's son[89] eventually drank the soma[90] juice with Indra himself."'

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'The gandharva said, "O Partha! In the world, there was a king named Kalmashapada. He was born in the lineage of Ikshvaku and he was unrivalled on earth in his prowess. One day, the king left his capital to go on a hunt in the forest. That chastiser of enemies shot many deer and boars. Hungry and thirsty, the king followed a narrow path and

met Vashishtha's great-souled son on the way. The son was an illustrious sage and his name was Shakti. He was the illustrious extender of Vashishtha's lineage and was the eldest of the great-souled Vashishtha's 100 sons. As they came face to face in opposite directions on the narrow path, the king said, 'Move off from our path.' The rishi then spoke to him in a soothing and kind voice, but did not yield the path, because he was following the path of dharma.[91] Out of pride and anger at the sage, the king did not yield the path either. When the sage refused to give way, the best of kings, deluded like a rakshasa, struck the sage with his whip. Thus struck by the whip, Vashishtha's son, the best of sages, was angered and cursed the best of kings. 'O worst of kings! Since you have struck an ascetic like a rakshasa, from today you will become a maneater. O corrupt king! Go from here and wander around the earth, eating human flesh.' Thus, Shakti cursed him through the strength of his powers.

'"Vashishtha and Vishvamitra had had a quarrel over who should be the officiating priest.[92] At that time, Vishvamitra, came to that place. O Partha! The immensely powerful Vishvamitra, the rishi with great austerities, neared the place where the two were quarrelling. After the curse on the great king, the rishi[93] recognized that the rishi[94] was none other than Vashishtha's son, as powerful as Vashishtha himself. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Desiring to bring some benefit to himself, Vishamitra remained there, but concealed himself by making himself invisible from them. Having been cursed by Shakti, that best of kings[95] sought Shakti's mercy and worshipped him, so as to pacify him. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! Knowing the king's nature, Vishvamitra ordered a rakshasa to enter the king's body. Because of the Brahmana rishi's curse and because of Vishvamitra's instruction, a rakshasa named Kimkara then entered the king's body. O chastiser of enemies! Knowing that the rakshasa had entered the king's body, Vishvamitra, the best of sages, went away.

'"Thereafter, the wise king was possessed and tormented by the rakshasa within him and found it difficult to save himself. A certain Brahmana saw the king roaming in the forest. Being hungry, he begged for some food with meat. Rajarshi Kalmashapada Mitrasaha[96] said, 'O Brahmana! Stay here for a while. When I return, I will give you the food you desire to have.' Having said this, the king went away and that best of Brahmanas remained there. But when he entered the inner quarters of his palace, the king forgot about his promise to the Brahmana and remembered it only at midnight. He told his cook, 'Go to the forest. A Brahmana is waiting for me there, hoping to get some food. Take some meat to him.' Having been thus addressed, the cook could not find any meat anywhere and came and sorrowfully informed the king about this. Possessed by the rakshasa, the king unhesitatingly told the cook, 'Feed him human flesh,' and repeated his instructions. Agreeing, the cook quickly went to where executioners lived and took some human flesh from them. Washing it and cooking it properly, he mixed it

with rice and quickly took it to the hungry and ascetic Brahmana.

'"Through his ascetic sight, the best of Brahmanas immediately recognized the food to be forbidden. His eyes red with anger, he said, 'That worst of kings has offered me food that is forbidden. Therefore, that deluded one will himself become fond of such food. Becoming fond of human flesh, as Shakti had cursed him earlier, he will roam the earth and persecute all beings.' Repeated for the second time, the curse on the king became very strong. Being possessed by the rakshasa, the king soon lost all his senses. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On seeing Shakti, that best of kings, having been deprived of his senses by the rakshasa within him, said, 'Because you have imposed this unparalleled curse on me, I shall begin my man-eating predicament by eating you first.' Having said this, the king immediately separated Shakti from his life and ate him up, the way a tiger devours its favoured prey. Having seen Shakti killed thus, Vishvamitra urged the rakshasa to kill Vashishtha's other sons. Like an angry lion devours small animals, he ate up all the younger sons of the great-souled Vashishtha.

'"When Vashishtha learnt that Vishvamitra had conspired to get his sons killed, he bore his grief patiently, like a great mountain bears the earth. That best of sages, chief among those who are intelligent, resolved to sacrifice himself rather than set his mind on extinguishing the Kushika lineage. The illustrious rishi threw himself down from the peak of Mount Meru and his head struck the stones like a bale of cotton. O Pandava! When the illustrious one found that the fall did not kill him, he lit a fire in that great forest and entered it. But though the flames blazed up high, they did not kill him. O chastiser of enemies! Instead, the blazing flames cooled him. Seeing the ocean, the grief-stricken and great sage tied a heavy stone around his neck and flung himself into the water. But the strong waves brought the great sage back to the shore. With a sorrowful heart, he then returned to his hermitage."'

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'The gandharva said, "On seeing that his hermitage was bereft of his sons, the grief-stricken sage left it again. O Partha! He saw a river swollen with the new water of the rainy season. It was sweeping away many trees that grew along the banks. O descendant of Puru! On seeing this, the miserable one again began to think that he would certainly be killed in this water. Thereupon, the great sage bound himself with strong ropes and, struck with great grief, flung himself into the waters of that great river. O chastiser of enemy armies! But the river tore those ropes away and, unfettered, washed the rishi up onto the bank. Freed from the bindings, the great rishi arose and gave the river the name of Vipasha.[97]

'"However, his mind was obsessed with grief and he did not stay in any one place. He went to mountains, rivers and lakes. Seeing once more the terrible river Himavati,[98] terrible of appearance and full of fierce animals, he once more flung himself into its

waters. That best of rivers, thinking that the Brahmana was fire, immediately fled in a hundred directions and thereafter came to be known as Shatadru.[99] Finding that he was once again on dry land, he exclaimed that he was unable to die at his own hands and returned to his hermitage.

'"When he was returning to his hermitage, his daughter-in-law Adrishyanti followed him. As she came near, he heard the sound of Vedic incantations, embellished with the fullness of meaning of the six branches.[100] 'Who is following me?' he asked. 'I am Adrishyanti, Shakti's wife,' his daughter-in-law answered. 'O illustrious one! I am austere, engaged in austerities.' Vashishtha said, 'O daughter! Who is reciting the Vedas and their angas that I hear? It is just as I have heard it from Shakti earlier.' Adrishyanti said, 'In my womb, there is a son begotten by Shakti. He has been there for twelve years. O sage! You have heard his recitations.' Having been thus addressed by her, Vashishtha, the best of rishis, was greatly delighted. O Partha! Exclaiming that there was a son, he refrained from death.

'"The unblemished one returned,[101] accompanied by his daughter-in-law. He found Kalmashapada seated in the deserted forest. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On seeing him,[102] possessed by the rakshasa, the king arose in anger and sought to devour him. But seeing the king of evil deeds, Adrishyanti spoke to Vashishtha in fear and alarm, 'O illustrious one! This terrible rakshasa looks like death himself, as he advances towards us with a fearful wooden club in his hand. O best among those who are learned in all the Vedas! Except you, no one on earth has the power to ward him off. O illustrious one! Save me from this evil one, whose form is terrible. Without a doubt, the rakshasa is advancing towards us to devour us.'"'

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'"Vashishtha said, 'O daughter! Do not be frightened. There is nothing to be frightened of from a rakshasa. There is no danger from the one you see advancing. He is not a rakshasa. He is King Kalmashapada, powerful and famous on earth. That terrible one lives in this part of the forest.'"

'The gandharva said, "O descendant of the Bharata lineage! As he[103] advanced towards them, the illustrious and energetic rishi Vashishtha stopped him with a roar. He sprinkled water sanctified with mantras over him and freed the good king from the terrible rakshasa. For twelve years, the king had been swallowed through the energy of Vashishtha's son, like the sun is swallowed by the one who swallows[104] at the time of an eclipse. Thus freed from the rakshasa, the king reddened the great forest with his energy, like the sun illuminates the evening[105] clouds. Regaining his senses, the king worshipped Vashishtha, the best of rishis, with joined palms and said, 'O illustrious one! O best of Brahmanas! I am the son of Sudasa. You are my preceptor. Tell me what your

wish is now and what I should do.' Vashishtha said, 'O lord of men! My desire was fulfilled when the right time arrived. Return to your kingdom and rule and never again disregard Brahmanas.' The king said, 'O illustrious one! I shall never again disregard the bulls among Brahmanas. In accordance with your instructions, I shall always worship the twice-born. O best among the twice-born! O best among those who are learned in the Vedas! I wish to obtain a boon from you, so that I can be freed from the debt I owe to the Ikshvaku lineage. I wish to have a son. Please go to my beloved queen,[106] who is virtuous, beautiful and has all the qualities, so that the Ikshvaku lineage can be extended.'

'"Vashishtha, the best of Brahmanas and always devoted to the truth, agreed to the desires of the great archer, the king. O king of men! After some time, Vashishtha, accompanied by the one without blame,[107] went to his capital, famous in this world as Ayodhya. In great joy, all the people came out to welcome the great-souled and sinless one,[108] like gods welcome their chief. Accompanied by the great-souled Vashishtha, the king of men soon entered his auspicious city. O king! The citizens of Ayodhya saw him, like the sun rising in Pushya.[109] The king, the most fortunate among those who are blessed with fortune, filled Ayodhya, like the cool moon which fills the skies when it rises in the autumn. His mind was gladdened when he saw that supreme of cities, with its streets clean and washed, adorned with flags and pennants. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! That city was full of people who were happy and well fed. It looked as radiant as Amaravati[110] in Indra's presence.

'"After the rajarshi had entered the best of cities, the queen came to Vashishtha at the king's command. When the season was right, maharshi Vashishtha, the rishi who always obtained the best share, united with her, in accordance with the divine rites laid down by the gods. Thereafter, when the queen conceived through him, the best of sages received salutations from the king and returned to his hermitage. When she had carried the embryo for a long time, the famous lady split her womb open with a stone. O bull among men! After twelve years, rajarshi Ashmaka was born, the one who founded the city of Potana."'

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'The gandharva said, "O king! Living in the hermitage, Adrishyanti gave birth to a son who was the extender of Shakti's lineage and was like a second Shakti. O best of the Bharata lineage! The best of the sages, the illustrious one, himself performed the prescribed birth ceremonies of his grandson. Because the sage Vashishtha had resolved to kill himself, but refrained from doing so when he heard of the son in the womb, he was known in the world by the name of Parashara.[111] From the date of his birth, that virtuous one knew Vashishtha to be his father and behaved towards him like a father. O

Kaunteya! O scorcher of enemies! When the child addressed the Brahmana rishi Vashishtha as 'father' in front of his mother Adrishyanti, she heard the sweet word, so full of meaning, uttered by him. Adrishyanti spoke to him with tears in her eyes. 'O son! Do not use the word father. The great sage is not your father. O son! Your father was devoured by a rakshasa in the deep forest. O innocent son! The one you think of as your father is not your father. The illustrious one is the father of your famous father.' Having been thus addressed, the best of rishis[112] was grief-stricken, because he always spoke the truth. The great-souled one resolved to destroy all the worlds. On seeing him thus resolved, the great-souled Vashishtha, great in austerities, gave reasons for refraining. Hear them.

'"Vashishtha said, 'There was a great king known by the name of Kritavirya. In this world, that bull among kings had as his priest the Bhrigus, learned in the Vedas. At the end of his soma sacrifice, the king gratified those who are the first receivers of offerings[113] with many presents of grain and riches. When that tiger among men had ascended to heaven, there came a time when his descendants were in need of riches. O son! Knowing that the Bhrigus were affluent, those kings went to the best of the Bhrigus, in the disguise of beggars, to ask for riches. To save their indestructible riches, some of the Bhrigus buried them in the ground. Fearing danger from the Kshatriyas, others gave away their riches to Brahmanas. O son! Some of the Bhrigus gave them as much of riches as they wanted, thinking that some other use might be found for the Kshatriyas.

'"'O son! Then one day, some of the Kshatriyas, according to their wishes, dug up the ground in the dwelling place of the Bhrigus and discovered a treasure. All the bulls among the Kshatriyas, who were assembled there, saw the treasure. Thereafter, angry and contemptuous, those supreme archers shot down the Bhrigus with their sharp arrows, though they craved for mercy. They travelled all over the earth, killing even children in wombs. O son! When they were killed in this way, many Bhrigu wives fled in fear and sought refuge in the mountains of the Himalayas.

'"'Among them was a lady with beautiful thighs. She resolved to perpetuate her husband's race and kept her immensely energetic embryo hidden in her thigh, so that it might not be discovered. But the Kshatriyas discovered the Brahmana lady, who blazed in her radiance. Then the child appeared, tearing her thigh open and blinding the eyes of the Kshatriyas like the midday sun. Thereupon, deprived of their eyesight, the Kshatriyas began to wander around in the difficult passes of the mountain. Frustrated in their desire and frightened, those bulls among the Kshatriyas sought refuge with that unblemished Brahmana lady, so that their eyesight might be restored. They were out of their minds with pain. They had lost their eyesight and were like a fire that has been put out. Those Kshatriyas spoke to the lady. "O illustrious lady! Through your grace, may the Kshatriyas regain their eyesight. All of us will depart from here with our evil deeds. You and your son should show us mercy. You should save these kings by restoring their

eyesight to them.’”’”

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“‘“The Brahmana woman said, “O sons! I have not robbed you of your eyesight. Nor am I angry with you. It is the Bhargava who has been born from my thigh who is angry with you. O sons! There is no doubt that your eyesight has been taken away by this great-souled one, whose anger has been aroused on remembering that you had killed his relatives. O sons! When you destroyed even the Bhrigu sons in the wombs, I carried this child in my thigh for 100 years so that he might do that which is good for the Bhrigu lineage. All the Vedas, including their six angas, came to him when he was in the womb. Angry at the killing of his fathers, he certainly wishes to kill you. It is through his divine radiance that your eyesight has been destroyed. O sons! Pray to Ourva, this supreme son of mine. If he is placated through your homage, he may restore your eyesight.”’

“‘Vashishtha said, ‘Having been thus addressed, all the kings addressed the son who had been born from her thigh and begged him for mercy. He was merciful. Since that supreme Brahmana rishi was born after splitting open the thigh, he came to be known in the worlds by the name of Ourva. Regaining their eyesight, the kings returned. But the Bhargava sage decided to bring about the destruction of the entire world. O son! That great-souled one decided to bring about the destruction of all the worlds. In order to bring honour to the Bhrigus, that descendant of the Bhrigu lineage engaged in great austerities, so as to bring about the destruction of all the worlds. Through his great and severe austerities, he burnt the worlds with the gods, the asuras and men, and gratified his ancestors. On learning what the descendant of the lineage was planning to do, the ancestors descended from their world and told him, “O Ourva! O son! We have witnessed the power of your severe austerities. Have mercy for the worlds and control your anger. O son! The self-controlled Bhrigus weren’t powerless. Nor were they indifferent to slaughter at the hands of the violent Kshatriyas. O son! When we got tired of our long lives, we ourselves wished for our deaths at the hands of the Kshatriyas. The riches that were buried in the ground in the dwelling place of the Bhrigus were placed there with the intention of angering the Kshatriyas and creating enmity with them. O bull among the twice-born! What use are riches to us when we wish to attain heaven? O son! When we found that death was completely unable to overcome all of us, we thought this would be the most pleasant way. O son! Those who kill themselves never attain the best worlds. Remembering that, we did not kill ourselves with our own hands. O son! That which you desire does not please us at all. Therefore, control your mind and refrain from this evil destruction of all the worlds. O son! None of the Kshatriyas in the seven worlds[114] has offended or harmed our austerities. Win over the anger that has arisen in you.”’”’

‘‘‘Ourva said, “O ancestors! In anger, I took a vow that all the worlds would be destroyed and that cannot go in vain. Because I cannot be one whose anger and vows come to nothing. Without a doubt, my anger will consume me, the way fire consumes dry kindling.[115] When anger arises from a reason that is just, a man who suppresses it cannot properly safeguard the three goals.[116] Anger has the purpose of restraining the evil and protecting the good. Kings who wish to conquer heaven use their anger for a just cause. I was lying unborn inside my mother’s thigh; I heard cries when my mothers of the Bhrigu lineage were slaughtered by the Kshatriyas. O ancestors! When those worst of the Kshatriyas slaughtered the Bhrigus, including those in wombs and the worlds ignored this, anger entered my heart. My mothers, heavy in their wombs, and my fathers were frightened, but did not find a protector in all the worlds. When the women of the Bhrigu lineage did not find a single protector, my fortunate mother hid me in one of her thighs. If there is one who punishes crimes in the worlds, no one in the worlds will dare to commit a crime. But if a crime doesn’t find a punisher, many in the worlds will commit crimes. A man who has the power to punish a crime and doesn’t do so, despite knowing that a crime has been committed, is himself tainted by the deed, even if he is the lord. The kings and others were capable of protecting my fathers, but failed to do so. Giving themselves up to the pleasures of life, they neglected their duties. Therefore, I have justifiable reason to be angry with the worlds and am now their lord. Yet, I am not capable of disobeying your instructions, even though I am capable of punishing a crime. By refraining from doing so, I will once again encourage the spread of evil in the worlds. The anger of my rage wishes to consume the worlds. If I suppress it with my own powers, it will consume me with its energy. O lords! I know that you always strive for the welfare of the worlds. Therefore, instruct me on what is best for the worlds and for me.”

‘‘‘The ancestors said, “This fire that is born from your anger wishes to consume the worlds. Cast it into the waters and be fortunate, because the worlds are established on water. Every juice consists of water. Indeed, the entire universe is made out of water. O best of the twice-born! Therefore, release your anger into the water. O Brahmana! If you so desire, let the anger of your fire be in the great ocean. Let it consume the water, because we have heard that the worlds are made out of water. O unblemished one! In this way, your vow will remain true and the worlds, with their gods, will not be destroyed.”’

‘‘Vashishtha said, ‘Thereupon, Ourva hurled the fire of his anger into Varuna’s territory and the fire consumes the waters of the great ocean. Those who are learned in the Vedas know that it has assumed the form of a large horse’s head,[117] which spouts fire from the mouth and consumes the waters of the great ocean. O Parashara! You are the foremost among those who are wise. You are familiar with the higher dharma. Be

blessed and refrain from destroying the worlds.’”’

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‘The gandharva said, “Having been thus addressed by the great-souled Vashishtha, the Brahmana rishi[118] controlled his anger, which would have destroyed all the worlds. But the immensely energetic Parashara, Shakti’s son and chief among those who were learned in the Vedas, performed a rakshasa sacrifice. Remembering Shakti’s slaughter, the great sage began to consume rakshasas, old and young, in that sacrifice. Not wishing to restrain him from this second vow, Vashishtha did not prevent him from destroying the rakshasas. The great sage sat at that sacrifice, with three blazing fires in front of him. He himself looked like a fourth fire. Many were the offerings that were poured at this radiant sacrifice and the sky was lit up, like the sun emerging from behind the clouds. Vashishtha and the other sages regarded the sage, blazing with his own radiance, like a second sun. Thereupon, the great and noble-minded sage Atri came to that place, wishing to put an end to the sacrifice, a task that would have been impossible for anyone else to accomplish.

‘“O destroyer of enemies! Pulastya, Pulaha and Kratu also came to that great sacrifice, since they also desired that the rakshasas should live. O bull of the Bharata lineage! O Partha! On seeing that many rakshasas had already been killed, Pulastya spoke to Parashara, that chastiser of enemies. ‘O son! Do you find no obstructions in the way of this sacrifice? O son! Do you find pleasure in killing all these rakshasas, who are ignorant and innocent?[119] O Parashara! You are foremost among those who drink the soma juice. You should not destroy all my progeny in this way. You are a virtuous man. You should not think that the path of adharma will be good for you. King Kalmashapada himself wishes to ascend to heaven. Shakti’s younger brothers, sons of the great sage Vashishtha, are now enjoying great happiness in the company of the gods. O son! O hermit! All this was known to the great sage Vashishtha, including the destruction of the rakshasas. O Vashishtha’s descendant! You have only been an instrument in this sacrifice. Be fortunate and give up this sacrifice. Let it come to an end now.’ Having been thus addressed by Pulastya and the wise Vashishtha, Shakti’s son Parashara brought an end to the sacrifice. The sage threw away the fire that had been lit for the rakshasa sacrifice into the great forest that was to the north of the Himalayas. Even today, the fire is always visible there in all the seasons, consuming rakshasas, trees and rocks.”’

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‘Arjuna said, “Why did King Kalmashapada himself call and instruct his wife to go to his preceptor, supreme among those who are learned in the Vedas? Why did the great-souled maharshi Vashishtha, who knew the path of supreme dharma, agree to go to a

woman who was forbidden? Why were these acts done earlier? I wish to know. Tell me in detail.”

‘The gandharva said, “O Dhananjaya! O one who cannot be repulsed! Listen to my answer to your question about the unassailable Vashishtha and King Mitrasaha.[120] O best of the Bharata lineage! I have already told you how the king was cursed by Shakti, Vashishtha’s great-souled son. Thus, under the influence of that curse, the king, that scorcher of enemies, came out of the city with his wife, his eyes rolling with anger. He went to a deserted forest with his wife and roamed around there. Under the influence of the curse, he roamed around in that forest, frequented by many beasts and other animals, overgrown with many plants and creepers, dense with many large trees and echoing with horrible howls. Once, obsessed with extreme hunger and exhausted, he saw in a lonely part of the forest a Brahmana and a brahmani, about to engage in an act of sexual union. Seeing him, the pair was frightened and ran away, their desire unsatisfied.

‘“Pursuing them, the king forcibly grabbed the Brahmana. Seeing that her husband had thus been seized, the brahmani said, ‘O king who is always rigid in his vows! Listen to what I have to say. It is known in all the worlds that you have been born in the solar dynasty. You have always been established in the path of dharma and you have always served your preceptors. O unassailable one! Though you have been deprived of your senses through a curse, do not commit an evil act. When my season had come, I was about to unite with my husband so as to obtain offspring. But I have not been successful and have great need. O best of kings! Be merciful to me and let my husband go.’ While she was crying thus, the king cruelly ate up her husband, the way a tiger devours a deer. On account of her anger, tears fell from her eyes on the ground and became a blazing fire that burnt up everything there. Grief-stricken and enraged at the death of her husband, the brahmani cursed rajarshi Kalmashapada, ‘O evil-minded one! Today, you have cruelly devoured before my own eyes my illustrious and beloved husband, even though I was not satisfied. Therefore, through my curse, you will meet with instant death when you unite with your wife when she is in season. Rishi Vashishtha, whose sons you have eaten, will unite with your wife and she will give birth to a son. O worst of kings! That son will perpetuate your lineage.’ Having thus cursed the king, that fortunate lady of the Angirasa lineage entered the flaming fire in his presence.

‘“O scorcher of enemies! The immensely fortunate Vashishtha knew all this through his great austerities and his powers of knowledge that come through yoga. After a long time, the rajarshi was freed from the curse and went to his wife Madayanti when she was in season, but she repulsed him. Deluded by the curse, the king had no recollection of the curse. On hearing the lady’s words, that best of kings remembered the curse and was greatly alarmed. O best of the Bharata lineage! It was for this reason that the king requested Vashishtha to accept his own wife, because he suffered from the curse.”’

# Section Twelve

## Droupadi-svayamvara Parva

*This parva has 263 shlokas and twelve chapters.*

Chapter 174: 12 shlokas
Chapter 175: 20 shlokas
Chapter 176: 36 shlokas
Chapter 177: 22 shlokas
Chapter 178: 18 shlokas
Chapter 179: 23 shlokas
Chapter 180: 22 shlokas
Chapter 181: 40 shlokas
Chapter 182: 15 shlokas
Chapter 183: 9 shlokas
Chapter 184: 18 shlokas
Chapter 185: 28 shlokas

Svayamvara *is a form of marriage where the bride chooses her own groom. The parva is about Droupadi choosing her own groom.*

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'Arjuna said, "O gandharva! You know everything. Tell us who, learned in the Vedas, is fit to be appointed our priest." The gandharva said, "There is a tirtha in this forest known as Utkochaka. Devala's younger brother Dhoumya is engaged in practising austerities there. If you wish, you can appoint him as your priest."'

Vaishampayana said, 'Then Arjuna happily gave the gandharva his agneya weapon, in accordance with the prescribed rituals. He said, "O best of the gandharvas! Keep the horses for the moment. We shall take them from you when we need them. Be blessed." Then the gandharva and the Pandavas respectfully saluted each other and left the beautiful banks of the Bhagirathi, to go wherever they wished.

'O descendant of the Bharata lineage! The Pandavas went to Utkochaka tirtha and Dhoumya's hermitage. They instated Dhoumya as their priest. Dhoumya, foremost among those who know all the Vedas, received them with water to wash their feet and with offerings of fruits and roots from the forest. He agreed to be their priest. Having obtained the Brahmana at their forefront, the Pandavas were hopeful of obtaining riches and the kingdom and of winning Panchali in the svayamvara. With their mother constituting the sixth person of the group, those bulls of the Bharata lineage considered themselves well protected, now that they had a preceptor. For the noble preceptor knew the subtle nuances of the Vedas well. He made the virtuous sons of Pritha his disciples in learning all the knowledge. Seeing that those warriors were already endowed with

intelligence, valour, strength and perseverance equal to that of the gods, he decided that they were already restored to their kingdom through their own virtues. He blessed them. Those kings among men decided to go with him to the svayamvara in Panchala.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'Then those tigers among men, the five Pandava brothers, set out to see Droupadi and the great and divine festival. Those tigers among men, the scorchers of enemies, and their mother saw many Brahmanas who were headed in the same direction. O king! Those Brahmanas asked the Pandavas, who were travelling as brahmacharis, "Where are you going? Where have you come from?" Yudhishthira said, "O revered ones who have seen the gods! Know that we are brothers who have come from Ekachakra and are travelling with our mother."

'The Brahmanas said, "Then you should now go to the house of Drupada of Panchala. A large svayamvara ceremony will be held there, with a lot of riches. We are going there ourselves. Let us go together. A great ceremony, with wonderful events, will take place there. The great-souled Yajnasena Drupada obtained a daughter from the middle of the sacrificial altar and her eyes are like lotus petals, with unblemished features and beauty, youth and intelligence. She is the sister of the powerful Dhrishtadyumna, Drona's enemy. He arose from the blazing fire, as resplendent as the fire, with mighty arms, natural armour, sword and bow and arrows. His sister is the slender-waisted Droupadi whose form is flawless. Her body emits the fragrance of a blue lotus from a distance of one krosha. Yajnasena's daughter will choose a husband at the svayamvara. We are going there to see her and witness the divine and great festival. Kings and princes from different regions will be present there—performers of sacrifices at which large quantities of alms are offered, those devoted to studying, pure, great-souled, those devoted to their vows, young, handsome, maharathas and those skilled in the use of weapons. Desiring victory,[1] those kings of men will give away a lot of riches, cows, foodgrains and other objects of pleasure. Accepting whatever they offer and witnessing the svayamvara and all the festivities, we will then go wherever we wish. Actors, bards, dancers, raconteurs, panegyrists and powerful wrestlers will assemble from many countries. O great-souled ones! After witnessing those wonderful sights and accepting what is offered, you can also return with us. You are handsome. You look like gods. On seeing you, Krishna[2] may decide that one of you is the best and choose you. This brother of yours is handsome of appearance and has powerful arms. He may win those wrestling bouts and obtain great riches."

'Yudhishthira said, "We will go with you to witness that supreme, great and divine festival, the lady's svayamvara."'

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Vaishampayana said, 'O Janamejaya! Having been thus addressed, the Pandavas headed for the southern part of Panchala, ruled by King Drupada. On their way, the brave Pandavas met the great-souled, pure-souled, unblemished and illustrious sage Dvaipayana and paid their respects to him, in accordance with the prescribed rites. He too showed them his respect and after their conversation was over, on his instructions, they proceeded to Drupada's palace. Those maharathas proceeded slowly, stopping when they saw beautiful forests and lakes. At last, Kuru's descendants, devoted to learning, pure, amiable and sweet of speech, arrived in Panchala. After seeing the city and the royal residence, the Pandavas lodged in a potter's house. Adopting the lifestyle of Brahmanas, they begged for their food. No one recognized those warriors when they stayed there.

'Yajnasena always desired to give Krishna to Kiriti,[3] Pandu's son, but he never revealed this to anyone. O Janamejaya! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Thinking of Kunti's son, the Panchala got a very hard bow constructed, one that no one else would be able to bend. He had an artificial machine[4] set up above and onto this machine he fixed a golden target. Drupada said, "He who can string this bow and, after stringing, shoot the target above with these arrows, will obtain my daughter." With these words, King Drupada announced the svayamvara everywhere. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Hearing this, all the kings assembled. Many great-souled rishis also came there, wishing to witness the svayamvara. O king! The Kouravas, led by Duryodhana, also came there, accompanied by Karna. Many illustrious Brahmanas also came from many countries. The great-souled Drupada duly worshipped the kings. All the citizens and all the kings took their seats, resulting in a roar like that of the ocean full of porpoises.

'The platform was constructed on the north-east of the city, on a flat and auspicious piece of ground. The beautiful meeting place was surrounded by houses on all sides. It was enclosed by a wall and a moat on all sides, decorated with gates and covered everywhere with a colourful canopy. It echoed to the sound of many musical instruments, was scented with *agaru*,[5] adorned with garlands and sprinkled with sandalwood water. Large and white palaces that were well built surrounded it on all sides, like the peaks of Kailash when they touch the sky. The windows were covered with golden trellises and the walls sparkled with mosaic work of precious stones. The stairs were easy to climb. The seats were covered with expensive cloth that was not like those that came from villages. They were white like swans and scented with agaru, so that the fragrance could be smelt one yojana away. Each palace had 100 doors and had beautiful seats and couches. The expensive beds had many metals on them, like the peaks of the Himalayas. All the kings were seated on the many storeys of these palaces, each one decorated with many ornaments and boastful of his success. Those tigers among kings were scented with the paste of black agaru and were greatly fortunate,

devoted to the Brahmanas, protectors of their realms and loved by all the worlds because of their good deeds. When they were seated on their royal seats, the inhabitants of the city and of the country who had come to see Krishna also took their seats. The Pandavas took their seats with the Brahmanas and witnessed the unrivalled splendour of the king of Panchala. O king! For many days, the numbers who had assembled increased. Many jewels were distributed and many dancers and actors provided entertainment.

'O bull of the Bharata lineage! On the sixteenth day, when there was a crowd, Droupadi bathed, wore the best of clothing and adorned herself with many ornaments. She descended into the arena, carrying in her hand a beautifully adorned golden prize for the winner. After pouring offerings of ghee into the sacrificial fire according to prescribed rites, the priest of the Somakas,[6] a pure Brahmana, learned in the mantras, uttered salutations of peace to the fire and to Brahmanas and stopped the playing of all musical instruments.

'O ruler of the earth! When everything was quiet, Dhrishtadyumna went to the centre of the arena and spoke, in a thundering voice, words that were deep with meaning and sweet. "O assembled kings! Hear that this is the bow, that is the target and these are the arrows. With these five arrows, shoot the target through the hole in the centre of the machine. I truly say that the handsome and strong one, born in a noble family, who accomplishes this great feat today, will obtain as his wife my sister Krishna." Having thus addressed the assembled kings, Drupada's son spoke to Droupadi, recounting to her the lineages and deeds of the assembled kings.'

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'Dhrishtadyumna said, "Duryodhana, Durvisaha, Durmukha, Dushpradharshana, Vivimshati, Vikarna, Saha, Duhshasana, Sama, Yuyutsu, Vatavega, Bhimavegadhara, Ugrayudha, Balaki, Kanakayu, Virochana, Sukundula, Chitrasena, Suvarcha, Kanakadhvaja, Nandaka, Bahushali, Kunduja and Vikata—these and others are the immensely powerful sons of Dhritarashtra. These warriors have come with Karna for your hand.

'"Hundreds are the famous and great-souled kings, bulls among the Kshatriyas—Shakuni, Bala, Vrishaka and Brihadbala, all these sons of the king of Gandhara have come. Adorned with every ornament, the great-souled warriors Ashvatthama and Bhoja, skilled in the use of all weapons, have come. The kings Brihanta, Manimana and the valiant Dandadhara, Sahadeva, Jayatsena, Meghasandhi of Magadha, Virata and his two sons Sankha and Uttara, Vardhakshemi, Susharma, King Senabindu, Abhibhu with his sons Sudamna and Suvarchasa, Sumitra, Sukumara, Vrika, Satyadhriti, Suryadhvaja, Rochamana, Nila, Chitrayudha, Amshumana, Chekitana, the immensely powerful Shrenimana, Chandrasena, the powerful son of Samudrasena, Jalasamdha, the father

and son Vidanda and Danda, Poundraka, Vasudeva, the valorous Bhagadatta, Kalinga, Tamralipta, the king of Pattana, the maharatha Shalya, king of Madra with his sons, the brave Rukmagandha and Rukmaratha, the Kourava Somadatta and his three maharatha sons Bhuri, Bhurishrava and Shala, Sudakshina, Kamboja, the Kourava Dridhadhanva, Brihadbala, Sushena, Ushinara's son Shibi, Samkarshana, Vasudeva, Rukmini's brave son Samba, Charudeshna, Sarana, Gada, Akrura, Satyaki, the immensely powerful Uddhava, Hridika's son Kritavarma, Prithu, Viprithu, Viduratha, Kanka, Samika, Saramejaya, the brave Vatapati, Jhilli, Pindaraka, the brave Ushinara, all famous as descended from the Vrishni lineage; Bhagiratha, Brihatkshetra, Jayadratha, the king of Sindhu, Brihadratha, Bahlika, the maharatha Shrutayu, Uluka, King Kaitava, Chitrangada, Subhangada, the patient king of Vatsa, the king of Kosala.

'"O fortunate one! These and many other kings of many regions, famous on earth, have come here for you. These brave ones will try to shoot the excellent target for your hand. O beautiful one! You will choose as a husband the one who hits it."'

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Vaishampayana said, 'Those youthful kings were adorned with earrings. Each regarded himself as the most skilled in the use of weapons. All of them stood up and brandished their weapons. They boasted at one another, insolent with beauty, valour, lineage, virtue, riches and youth. They were like kings of elephants from the Himalayas, drunk in the season of rut. They stared at each other in insolence. Mentally struck with desire, they suddenly stood up from their royal seats and exclaimed, "Krishna will be mine." Assembled in that arena and eager to win Drupada's daughter, they looked like gods who stood around Uma, the daughter of the king of the mountains. Their bodies were pierced with the arrows of the god of love.[7] They completely lost their hearts to Krishna.[8] They descended into the arena, feeling hatred for their own relatives for Droupadi's sake.

'The gods came in their heavenly chariots—the rudras, the adityas, the vasus, the twin Ashvins, all the sadhyas and all the maruts, with Yama and the god of wealth[9] at the forefront. There also came the daityas, the suparnas,[10] the great uragas,[11] the devarshis, the guhyakas,[12] the charanas,[13] Vishvavasu, Narada, Parvata, the chief gandharvas with the apsaras, Halayudha,[14] Janardana[15] and the chiefs among the Vrishnis and the Andhakas. The chiefs among the Yadus, always devoted to Krishna, were also there, witnessing it. On seeing the five Pandavas, like elephants in rut that had come to a lake full of lotuses, like a fire covered with ashes, the chief of the Yadus[16] began to wonder. He told Rama,[17] "That is Yudhishthira. That is Bhima and that is Jishnu[18] and those are the valorous twins." Glancing at them leisurely, Rama cast a

pleased glance at Janardana.

'Biting their lower lips in anger, those other warriors, the sons and grandsons of kings, had set their eyes, hearts and natures on Krishna. Biting their lips and with faces that were like copper in colour, they only looked at her.[19] On seeing Droupadi, Pritha's mighty-armed sons and the brave and great-natured twins were struck with the arrows of the god of love.[20] The place was full of gods, rishis, gandharvas, suparnas, nagas, asuras and siddhas, pervaded with divine fragrances and covered with divine garlands. A great roar arose from the drums,[21] and the sounds of the flute, the veena and cymbals echoed. The celestial routes were crowded with the heavenly chariots of the gods.

'Then, one after another, those kings exhibited their valour for Krishna. But the bow was so strong that with all their strength, they could not string it. The firm wood of the bow recoiled and flung those brave rulers of men on the ground. They failed in their desire and could be seen on the ground, miserable and broken in spirit. That firm bow caused them pain and shattered their bracelets and earrings. Having lost hopes of obtaining Krishna, that assembly of kings was crestfallen. In that assembly, those kings who boasted of noble birth then became objects of derision. Kunti's brave son Jishnu then arose, wishing to string the bow and place an arrow on it.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'When all the kings gave up attempting to string the bow, the great-souled Jishnu arose from among the Brahmanas. On seeing Partha advance, with a complexion resplendent like that of Indra's flag, the chief Brahmanas shook their deerskins and created a loud uproar. Some of them were pleased. Others were displeased. Others among them, who lived by their wisdom and were wise, told each other, "O Brahmanas! If Kshatriyas like Karna and Shalya, who are famous in the world, have great strength and are well versed in Dhanur Veda,[22] could not string the bow, how can this weakling Brahmana, with no knowledge of weapons, succeed? If he fails to succeed in an act that he has undertaken because of his juvenile inexperience, the Brahmanas will become objects of ridicule in the eyes of the kings. Therefore, stop him from attempting to string the bow. He is doing it out of vanity and childishness, inexperienced at being a Brahmana. We will not be ridiculed, not incur anyone's disrespect. Nor will we displease the kings of this world." Others said, "He is handsome and youthful. He is like the trunk of the king of elephants. His shoulders, arms and thighs are built well. In perseverance, he looks like the Himalayas. One who is so resolute may well accomplish the task. Without a doubt, he has great strength and great endeavour. Without these, he would not have gone on his own. Besides, among the three orders,[23] there is no task in the worlds that Brahmanas cannot accomplish. Brahmanas abstain from food, live on air, eat only fruits, observe rigid vows and become weak, yet

retain the strength of their own energy. A Brahmana should not be looked down upon, whether his deeds are right or wrong. No one should consider him incapable of performing a deed, big or small, pleasing or unpleasant." The Brahmanas continued to voice their opinions in this way.

'Arjuna came to where the bow was and stood there like a stationary mountain. Circumambulating the bow in accordance with the rites, the scorcher of enemies bowed his head to the bow and joyously grasped it. In the twinkling of an eye, he strung the bow and grasped the five arrows. Through the hole in the machine, he suddenly pierced the target and it fell down on the ground. Thereupon, a great roar was heard in the sky and a great clamour arose in the assembly. The gods rained down celestial flowers on Partha's head, that killer of enemies. All the spectators waved their upper garments in joy, or uttered sounds of despair. Flowers showered down from the sky. The musicians played on hundreds of instruments. In a sweet voice, the bards and the raconteurs began to chant the praises of the hero. Seeing that destroyer of enemies, Drupada was extremely happy and wished to help Partha with his army, should the need arise.

'When the uproar reached its peak, Yudhishthira, foremost among those who tread the path of dharma, swiftly left the assembly and went home, accompanied by the twins, supreme among men. On seeing the target shot and on seeing Partha, the equal of Shakra,[24] Krishna was extremely happy. She went to Kunti's son with a garland of white flowers. All the Brahmanas paid homage to the one who had accomplished the unthinkable and had won her in the assembly. He soon left the arena, followed by the one who would be his wife.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'When the king expressed his desire to give his daughter to that great-souled Brahmana, all the assembled kings looked at each other and were filled with anger. The kings said, "We are assembled here and he passes us over like straw. He wishes to give Droupadi, supreme among women, to a Brahmana. This evil-hearted one does not respect us. Let us kill him. He does not deserve our respect or veneration because of qualities of age. On account of this, let us kill this wretch who insults kings and their sons. After inviting and entertaining in the proper fashion all the kings with food, he then shows them disrespect. In this assembly of kings, which is like a conclave of the gods, can he not find a single king who is his equal? The sacred texts clearly say that a svayamvara is for Kshatriyas; Brahmanas have no right in the choice of a husband. O kings! If this lady does not wish one of us as her husband, let us throw her into the fire and return to our kingdoms. Though that Brahmana has done injury to kings out of his impertinence and greed, he should not still be killed. After all, our kingdoms, lives, riches, sons, grandsons and all our other wealth exist for the sake of Brahmanas. But something must be done to prevent insult and to protect our own

dharma, so that other svayamvaras do not end like this one." Having said this, those tigers among kings, with arms like clubs, rushed at Drupada with diverse weapons, so as to kill him.

'Seeing those angry kings rush at him with bows and arrows, Drupada was frightened and sought the protection of the Brahmanas. However, as those kings rushed at Drupada like mad elephants, Pandu's two sons,[25] the great archers who conquered their enemies, advanced to repulse them. Thereupon, all the kings, their fingers clad in armour and with their weapons raised, violently rushed towards the Kuru princes, Arjuna and Bhimasena. Bhima, the performer of amazing deeds, with immense strength and like a thunderbolt, tore up a large tree with his hands and stripped it of all its leaves, like an elephant. With that tree, the mighty-armed Bhima, Pritha's son and the destroyer of enemies, stood next to Partha, bull among men and with long and thick arms, like Yama with his terrible staff.

'On seeing the unthinkable feats of Jishnu and his brother, Damodara,[26] the one with superhuman intelligence, turned to his brother Halayudha, himself the performer of awesome deeds, and said, "O Sankarshana! The warrior who has the gait of a mad bull and who holds a great bow that is 4 cubits long in his hand must be Arjuna. If I am Vasudeva's son, there can be no doubt about this. The warrior who has uprooted a tree with his strength and is instantly ready to repulse the kings is undoubtedly Vrikodara.[27] No other mortal on earth can perform such a feat today. O Achyuta![28] The other one who left a while ago, with eyes like lotus petals, slender and with the gait of a powerful lion, humble, fair and with a long and shining nose, must have been Dharmaraja. I am sure that the other two youths, each like Kartikeya, must have been sons of the two Ashvins. I had heard that Pandu's sons and Pritha had escaped from the fire in the house of lac." Halayudha, with a complexion like that of clouds, happily spoke to his younger brother, "I am delighted that our father's sister Pritha, with the foremost of the Kurus, has escaped."'

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Vaishampayana said, 'Those bulls among the Brahmanas shook their deerskins and water pots[29] and said, "Do not be frightened. We will fight with the enemies." Arjuna smilingly told those Brahmanas, "Stand aside as spectators. I will repulse those kings, like poisonous snakes, with mantras, with showers of hundreds of sharp-pointed arrows." Having said this, the maharatha took up the bow he had obtained as dowry and accompanied by his brother Bhima stood there like an immovable mountain. Seeing the Kshatriyas, with Karna leading them, furious to do battle, they fell upon them, like two elephants against hostile elephants. Eager to fight, those kings then said, "It is permissible to kill a Brahmana who is willing to fight." Then the mighty Vaikartana[30]

Karna rushed at Arjuna, eager to fight, like an elephant rushes at a rival over a female elephant. Shalya, king of the Madras, rushed at Bhimasena. Duryodhana and the others rushed at the Brahmanas, but they fought with them lightly and carelessly.

'Seeing Vaikartana Karna rush towards him, the wise Arjuna stretched his mighty bow and pierced him with three arrows. The impact of these sharp arrows stunned Radheya[31] and he approached with greater circumspection. Then those two invincible warriors fought violently, each eager to vanquish the other. Such was the speed that they became invisible.[32] "Look at the strength in my arms", "See how I countered that", they taunted each other in words that only warriors understand. Seeing the valour in Arjuna's arms, unparalleled on earth, Vaikartana Karna fought even more vigorously. Repulsing Arjuna's swift arrows, Karna shouted out aloud and the warriors applauded his feat.

'Karna said, "O foremost among Brahmanas! I am pleased with the strength of your arms, which do not tire in battle, and with your persistent control over weapons. O supreme among Brahmanas! Are you Rama,[33] the personification of the knowledge of weapons?[34] Or are you Harihaya[35] himself? Or are you Achyuta Vishnu himself? Have you assumed the form of a Brahmana to disguise yourself and are now fighting strongly with me for self-preservation, mustering the strength of your arms? When I am angry in the field of battle, no one except Shachi's husband[36] and Pandava Kiriti[37] can withstand me." Hearing these words, Phalguni[38] replied, "O Karna! I am not the science of weapons personified. Nor am I the powerful Rama. I am only a Brahmana, chief among warriors and supreme among those who have the knowledge of weapons. Through my preceptor's grace, I have become skilled in the use of brahma and paurandara[39] weapons. O warrior! Wait for a bit. I stand here today, to vanquish you in battle." At these words, Radheya Karna withdrew from the battle, because the maharatha thought that Brahmana strength was invincible.

'In another part of the arena, Shalya and Vrikodara, both warriors with great strength and knowledge of fighting, were engaged in battle. Calling out to each other, they fought like two mad and great elephants, striking each other with clenched fists and knees. For a while, they dragged each other around in the duel. Then the immensely powerful Bhima raised Shalya up with his arms and hurled him down on the ground. The Brahmanas began to laugh. Bhimasena, bull among men, surprised everyone.[40] But though he hurled the powerful one on the ground, he did not kill him. When Shalya was thus hurled down by Bhima and Karna scared away, all the other kings were frightened and surrounded Vrikodara. They said, "These bulls among Brahmanas are supreme. Let us find out in what lineage they were born and where they live. Who can fight with Radheya Karna in battle except Rama, Drona, Sharadvata Kripa,[41] Devaki's son

Krishna and Phalguni, the scorcher of enemies? Who can fight against Duryodhana and who can vanquish in battle the powerful Shalya, king of Madra and chief among warriors, except the brave Baladeva and Pandava Vrikodara? Therefore, let us desist from this fight against the Brahmanas. Let us find out who they are and then we will happily fight with them again." On witnessing Bhima's feat, Krishna believed them to be Kunti's sons. He gently restrained the assembled kings and said, "This lady has been won according to dharma." Thereupon, those best of kings, skilled in battle, refrained from the fight and returned to their kingdoms, wonderstruck. Those who had assembled there went away, exclaiming that the Brahmanas had won the day and Panchali had become the wife of a Brahmana.

'Surrounded by Brahmanas attired in the skins of deer and other animals, Bhimasena and Dhananjaya found it difficult to pass. Eventually, those radiant warriors among men freed themselves from the crowd, followed by Krishna. Their mother had been worried about various evils that might have occurred, since they were late in returning after begging for alms. She even thought that Dhritarashtra's sons might have recognized and killed those bulls among the Kurus. Had some terrible rakshasas, versed with powers of maya and firm in their enmity, killed them? However, could the great-souled Vyasa's predictions be wrong? Filled with love for her sons, these were the thoughts that occurred to Pritha. Then, late in the afternoon, Jishnu, in the company of many Brahmanas, entered with the Brahmana in the forefront,[42] like the sun surrounded by clouds.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'Pritha's two illustrious sons went to the potter's house and to Pritha. With happiness in their hearts, those chiefs among men presented Yajnaseni and said, "See what alms we have got." She was inside the house and without seeing her sons, replied, "Share it together." Later, Kunti saw the lady and was miserable at what she had said.

'She was anxious not to commit adharma and began to think about what might be done. She took the happy Yajnaseni by the hand and went to Yudhishthira and said, "This daughter of Drupada was presented to me as 'alms' your younger brothers had obtained. O king! O son! As I am in the habit of doing, but in ignorance, I said what I thought was proper, 'Share it together.' O bull among the Kurus! Now tell me how those instructions of mine don't become a lie. How can the Panchala king's daughter not be touched by adharma, committing that which hasn't been done before?" Having been thus addressed by his mother, the wise king Yudhishthira, chief among the Kurus, sat for a while and thought.

'He consoled Kunti and spoke to Dhananjaya. "O Pandava! You are the one who won Yajnaseni. It is proper that you should make this princess happy. Let the sacred fire be

lit and offerings made. You should marry her in accordance with the proper rites.” Arjuna said, “O king of men! Since this is not the law that others accept, do not make me tread this path of adharma. You should marry her first, followed by the mighty-armed Bhima of wonderful deeds, then I, then Nakula after me and finally the energetic Sahadeva. O king! Vrikodara, I and the twins think that the lady should be yours. This is the state of affairs. After reflecting on it, please do what is appropriate, in accordance with dharma and fame and the welfare of the king of Panchala. Instruct us. We are all waiting for your command.” Then they all looked at the illustrious Krishna who was standing there. They looked at each other and sat down, her image in their hearts.

‘When those immensely radiant ones looked at Droupadi, their love for her arose and put their senses into turmoil. Panchali’s charming form was created by the creator himself. It beguiled all living beings and was supreme to all others. Kunti’s son Yudhishthira knew from their appearance what was going through their minds. O bull among men! He remembered Dvaipayana’s words. Fearing that conflict might arise between the brothers, the king said, “This fortunate Droupadi will be a wife to all of us.”’

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Vaishampayana said, ‘Hearing the words of their eldest brother, all of Pandu’s sons, of infinite energy, were pleased and began to think about the purport of those words. Suspecting them to be the foremost of the Kurus, the chief of the Vrishnis[43] and Rohini’s son[44] then came to the potter’s house, where those foremost among men were living. Krishna and Rohini’s son saw Ajatashatru,[45] with long and thick arms, seated there. In a circle around him sat the others, like blazing fires. Vasudeva went to Kunti’s son, foremost among those who follow dharma. He touched with his hands the feet of King Ajamidha[46] Yudhishthira and said, “I am Krishna.” Rohini’s son went to Yudhishthira and did the same. Seeing them, the descendants of Kuru were greatly delighted. O chief of the Bharata lineage! The chiefs of the Yadu lineage then touched the feet of their father’s sister.[47]

‘Seeing Krishna, Ajatashatru, chief among the Kurus, asked him about his welfare and said, “O Vasudeva! When we are living here in disguise, how did you manage to track us down?” Vasudeva smiled and replied, “O king! Even when fire is covered, it comes out. Who but the Pandavas can display such valour among men? O destroyers of enemies! It was through good fortune that you escaped from that fire. It was through good fortune that Dhritarashtra’s evil son and his advisers did not succeed in their desires. Be blessed. Prosper, the way a fire hidden in a cave gradually expands and spreads. Permit us to return to camp. Otherwise, the kings may discover you.” Then, taking permission from the Pandavas, the eternally radiant one quickly went away, accompanied by Baladeva.’

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Vaishampayana said, 'When the two descendants of Kuru went towards the potter's house, Panchala Dhrishtadyumna followed them. Having sent his attendants away, he hid himself near the potter's house, unknown to those men.

'In the evening, Bhima, the crusher of enemies, and Jishnu returned with the twins, after begging for alms. They happily handed over to Yudhishthira what they had got. Thereupon, the soft-spoken Kunti spoke to Drupada's daughter. "O fortunate one! First, take a portion and offer it to the gods. Then give some alms to a Brahmana. Feed some to those who are needy and give some to men who are around. Then, divide the rest into two parts. O fortunate one! Give half to Bhima, because that dark youth with a strong body is like a mad bull and is a warrior who always eats a lot." Hearing these excellent words, the chaste princess cheerfully did what she was asked to do, without any doubts. All of them ate the food.

'Madri's son, the ascetic Sahadeva, quickly spread out a bed of kusha grass on the ground. Thereafter, each of those brave warriors spread out his own deerskin and lay down to sleep on the ground. Those foremost among the Kurus lay down, with their heads facing the direction blessed by Agastya.[48] Kunti lay herself down along their heads and Krishna lay down along their feet. Though she lay on the ground on kusha grass with Pandu's sons, like a foot pillow, she felt no grief. Nor did she feel disrespect for those bulls among the Kurus.

'Then those warriors began to talk to each other—wonderful stories about wars, celestial weapons, chariots, elephants, swords, clubs and battleaxes. The Panchala king's son heard all that they told each other during their conversation. His men saw how Krishna was lying there in that humble state. Prince Dhrishtadyumna set out[49] in great haste to tell King Drupada in detail everything that he had heard during the night. The Panchala king was sad, because he did not know where the Pandavas had gone. The great-souled one asked Dhrishtadyumna, "Where has Krishna gone? Who has taken her away? Is it a Shudra or one of low birth? Has a Vaishya who pays taxes placed his feet on my head? Has a garland been thrown away on a cremation ground? O son! Or is it a foremost man from our own varna, or is it one from a higher varna?[50] Or has a lower being[51] placed his foot on my head and defiled Krishna? I will be happy in my sacrifices if she has been united with Partha, that bull among men. Tell me truthfully. Which illustrious one has won my daughter today? Is there any chance that Vichitravirya's sons,[52] foremost among the Kurus, are still alive? Is it perhaps Partha who took up the bow and shot the target today?"'

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Vaishampayana said, 'Having been thus addressed, Prince Dhrishtadyumna, foremost of

the lunar dynasty, cheerfully told his father all that had occurred and by whom Krishna had been won.

'Dhrishtadyumna said, "The handsome youth with the long and red eyes, dressed in black deerskin and like a god in his form, who strung that supreme bow and brought down the target on the ground, left hurriedly and without concern. He was soon surrounded by the chief among the Brahmanas, who offered him homage. He strode as if he had vanquished Diti's sons,[53] surrounded by the gods and the rishis. Like an elephant bride happily follows the male elephant, Krishna followed, holding his deerskin. Unable to bear that sight, the assembled lords of men[54] were angered and advanced to fight him. At that, another hero arose in that assembly of kings. He uprooted a gigantic tree and drove away those masses of kings, like angry Yama strikes down all living creatures. O lord of men! Those assembled kings could only watch. Those foremost among men took Krishna and went away, resembling the sun and the moon. They went to a potter's house outside the city. A lady sat there, as radiant as a flame of fire. Around her sat three[55] foremost men, each one like a fire himself. I think she was their mother. Coming to her, those two heroes paid homage at her feet and asked Krishna to pay homage too. Leaving Krishna there, those foremost among men went out to beg for alms. It was Krishna who took from them the alms and offered a share to the gods and another to a Brahmana. She then served a part to that old lady and those five heroes among men and ate herself. O king! Then they all lay down to sleep together, with Krishna like a foot pillow. Their bed was made on the bare ground with darbha[56] grass on which deerskins were spread. They conversed on various subjects in voices that were as deep as dark clouds—wonderful tales that Vaishyas, nor Shudras, could speak of. Nor did those heroes speak of Brahmana tales. O king! There is no doubt that they are foremost among Kshatriyas. The stories that they told were about wars. Our hopes have clearly been fulfilled. We have heard that Pritha's sons escaped from the fire. From the way in which the bow was strung and the target brought down with strength, from the way in which they conversed with each other, it is certain that they are Pritha's sons, living in disguise." Thereupon, King Drupada was extremely happy.

'He sent his priest to them, directing him, "Go and tell them we know who they are. Ask them if they are by any chance the sons of the great-souled Pandu." As instructed by the king, the priest went to them and praised them. He told them in detail and in the right order the king's message. The priest said, "O first among those who deserve homage! The king of Panchala, the granter of wishes, wishes to know who you are. Seeing the one who has shot down the target, his joy has no bounds. Tell us the details of your family and your lineage. Place your feet on the heads of your enemies. Gladden the hearts of the king of Panchala and his men, and mine as well. King Pandu was a dear friend of King Drupada, who regarded him as his own self. He has all along desired

that his daughter should be given to that Kourava as his daughter-in-law. O heroes of unblemished limbs! This desire was always in King Drupada's heart, that the strong and long-armed Arjuna should marry his daughter according to dharma." After the priest had spoken these words and was quiet, the king[57] looked at the humble messenger and instructed Bhima, who was next to him, "King Drupada's priest is worthy of respect and let him be given more than normal homage. Get water to wash his feet, and offerings be given." O ruler of men! Bhima did as he had been instructed and he[58] accepted the offerings and happily seated himself.

'Yudhishthira then spoke to the Brahmana. "The king of Panchala gave his daughter away according to his wishes and according to his own dharma. He set a price[59] and this brave one has won her in accordance with that. Therefore, no questions can be asked about his varna, action, intention, means of living, lineage or *gotra*.[60] All those questions have been answered by the act of stringing the bow and striking the target. In doing that, this great-souled one has won Krishna in an assembly of kings. Since that is the case, the king of the lunar dynasty has no reason to regret his decision or be unhappy. O Brahmana! King Drupada's eternal desire will certainly come to be true for the king, because I think that this king's daughter was unattainable otherwise. No one weak in strength or of low birth or unskilled in the use of arms could have strung that bow and shot down the target. Today, it is therefore not proper for the king of Panchala to grieve over his daughter. No man on earth can now undo the fact that he succeeded in shooting down the target." While Yudhishthira was uttering these words, another messenger swiftly came from the king of Panchala, to announce that the feast had been prepared.'

# Section Thirteen

# Vaivahika Parva

*This parva has 155 shlokas and six chapters.*

*Chapter 186: 15 shlokas*
*Chapter 187: 32 shlokas*
*Chapter 188: 22 shlokas*
*Chapter 189: 49 shlokas*
*Chapter 190: 18 shlokas*
*Chapter 191: 19 shlokas*

Vivaha *means wedding and this parva is about Droupadi's marriage.*

## 186

'The messenger said, "Because of the wedding, King Drupada has prepared a good feast for the bridegroom's party. Come there with Krishna after finishing the daily rituals. Do not delay. These chariots, adorned with golden lotuses and drawn by excellent horses, are worthy of being ridden by those who rule the earth. Ascending on them, all of you come swiftly to the palace of the king of Panchala."'

Vaishampayana said, 'When he[1] left, all the bulls among the Kurus[2] sent the priest on ahead of them. Placing Kunti and Krishna on one chariot, they ascended those great chariots and left. O king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Having heard from the priest the words of Dharmaraja, he[3] kept ready a large collection of things like fruits, sanctified garlands, shields, armour, seats, cattle, ropes, and other objects used in agriculture, to determine the nature of the Kurus.[4] The king also completely provided for all objects concerning other crafts and all articles used in sports—chariots, horses, armour that were shining, great swords, adorned horses and chariots, the best of bows and the choicest of arrows and spears and lances laced with gold, javelins, catapults and battleaxes, all instruments connected with war. There were beds and seats and many other objects of craftsmanship.

'Taking the righteous Krishna with her, Kunti entered the inner quarters of Drupada. The ladies worshipped the wife of the king of the Kouravas eagerly. O king! On seeing those chief among men, with eyes like those of powerful bulls, dressed in deerskin for upper garments, with broad shoulders and long arms that were like coiled snakes, with the gait of lions, the king, the king's advisers, the king's sons and the king's relatives and attendants were then extremely delighted. Without hesitation or surprise, those warriors then seated themselves on the best of seats, with separate footstools. One after another, they sat, according to age. Well-dressed male and female servants and skilled

cooks brought all types of food worthy of kings, in plates made of gold and silver.

'Having eaten, those foremost among men were pleased, and relaxed. They examined all the objects that were laid out and the warriors showed the most interest in the various implements of war. On seeing this, Drupada's sons, the king himself[5] and all his chief advisers were delighted at having realized that the sons of Kunti were the sons and grandsons of kings. They paid their respects.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'Then the greatly radiant king of Panchala spoke to Prince Yudhishthira in the form that is reserved for Brahmanas and cheerfully asked Kunti's son, "Should we know you as Kshatriyas or Brahmanas? Are you accomplished Vaishyas or are you born from the wombs of Shudras? Are you siddhas[6] who use their powers of maya to roam in all directions and have come here from heaven in search of Krishna?[7] O lord! Tell us the truth, because we are in great doubt. Will our hearts not be content when our doubts have been removed? O scorcher of enemies! Will our share of fate prove to be fortunate? From your heart, tell us the truth. Among kings, truthfulness is a better adornment than sacrifices and alms. Therefore, do not say that which is untrue. O destroyer of enemies! O you who are the equal of the gods! After hearing your reply, I will then make arrangements for the marriage according to what is proper."[8] Yudhishthira replied, "O king of Panchala! Do not be disheartened. Be happy. There is no doubt that your wishes have come true. O king! We are Kshatriyas and sons of the great-souled Pandu. Know me to be the eldest of Kunti's sons. These are Bhimasena and Arjuna. O king! Your daughter was won by these in an assemblage of kings. O king of kings! The twins are waiting there, where Krishna is. O bull among kings! Let all sorrow be dispelled from your heart. We are Kshatriyas. Like a lotus, your daughter has been transplanted from one pond to another. O great king! This is the truth that I have told you. You are like our preceptor and our main refuge." On hearing this, King Drupada's eyes brimmed over with joy.

'For some time, he could not answer Yudhishthira properly. Controlling his delight with great effort, the king, the conqueror of enemies, [9] spoke to Yudhishthira in the appropriate form. The one with virtue in his heart[10] asked how they[11] had escaped from that city.[12] The Pandava[13] narrated it in detail, from the beginning. On hearing the narration from Kunti's son, King Drupada censured Dhritarashtra, that ruler of men. Drupada, chief among all men who are eloquent, gave every assurance to Kunti's son Yudhishthira and vowed that he would restore him to his kingdom. On the king's invitation, Kunti, Krishna, Bhimasena, Arjuna and the twins took up residence in that great palace.

‘O king! They continued to live there, treated with every respect by Yajnasena.[14] Later, the king and his sons spoke to those[15] who had been reassured. Drupada said, “Let the mighty-armed son[16] of Kuru today accept my daughter’s hand in accordance with the prescribed rites. Today, the moment is an auspicious one.” On this, the righteous-souled Yudhishthira replied, “O lord of people! Then I too, must take a wife.” Drupada said, “O lord! O warrior! Then you accept my daughter’s hand in accordance with the rites. Or give Krishna in marriage to whomsoever you wish.” Yudhishthira replied, “O king! Droupadi will be the queen to all of us. O lord of the people! This is what has already been ordered by my mother. I am yet unmarried, and so is the Pandava Bhimasena. Your jewel of a daughter has been won by Partha.[17] O king! It is our rule that every jewel we obtain must be equally shared. O best of kings! We are not willing to break that rule now. According to the prescribed norms, Krishna will be the wedded queen of all of us. According to age, let her accept our hands, one after another, before the fire.”

‘Drupada said, “O descendant of the Kuru lineage! It has been decreed that one man may have many queens. But we have never heard that one woman can have many men. O son of Kunti! Pure as you are, and well acquainted with the path of dharma, you should not commit an act that is counter to dharma, the Vedas and usual practice. Why has your intelligence become thus?” Yudhishthira replied, “O great king! Subtle is the path of dharma; we do not know its direction. Let us therefore follow the path that was trodden by illustrious men in ancient times. My tongue never utters that which is untrue. Nor has my mind ever turned to that which is adharma. This has been commanded by our mother and my mind also approves of it. O king! This is certainly dharma. Therefore, act accordingly, without hesitation. O ruler of the earth! Do not have any doubt on this score.” Drupada said, “O son of Kunti! You yourself, my son Dhrishtadyumna and Kunti must settle among yourselves what should be done now. Tomorrow, I will do that which is proper.” O descendant of the Bharata lineage! O king! At that, those three got together and discussed the matter. At that very moment, Dvaipayana arrived there, in accordance with his wishes.’

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Vaishampayana said, ‘As soon as they saw him, all the Pandavas and the greatly illustrious son of Panchala[18] stood up. All of them welcomed and paid their respects to the great-souled Krishna.[19] The great-minded one returned their greetings and asked about their welfare. He then sat down on a radiant and golden seat. Instructed by Krishna, the one with infinite energy, those greatest among men[20] also sat down on expensive seats. O lord of the people! After some time, in sweet words, Parshata[21]

asked the great-souled one about Droupadi.

'Drupada asked, "O fortunate lord! How can one woman become the wife of many, without leading to sin? Please explain this to us in detail." Vyasa replied, "This dharma has fallen into disuse because it runs counter to the Vedas and common practice. But on this, I wish to hear the opinions of each one of you."

'Drupada said, "In my view, this practice leads to a sin, because it is against the Vedas and common practice. O best of the Brahmanas! Nowhere can a wife of many be found. Nor did the illustrious ones, of ancient times, follow such a dharma. Those who have wisdom should never follow such a dharma. I can therefore never convince myself of acting in this way. To me, this dharma appears to be of doubtful morality." Dhrishtadyumna said, "O bull among the twice-born! O Brahmana! O one rich with austerities! If he follows the path that is righteous, how can an elder brother unite with the wife of his younger brother? The ways of dharma are always subtle and, therefore, we do not know the ways in entirety. Thus, we cannot say what is in accordance with dharma and what is not. O Brahmana! We cannot therefore perform such an act with a clear mind. I cannot say that Krishna should be the wife of five." Yudhishthira said, "My tongue never utters an untruth and my mind never turns to sin. When my mind approves, it cannot be sinful. I have heard in ancient tales that there was a lady named Jatila in the Goutama lineage. She was chief among all virtuous women and consorted with seven sages. O supreme among those who know the path of dharma! It is said that listening to the preceptor is virtue and among all preceptors, the mother is the foremost. She has commanded us that we must always share what we obtain. O best among the twice-born! Thus, do I consider this act virtuous." Kunti said, "It is as the virtuous Yudhishthira has said. I am frightened that my words might become untrue. How can I be saved from a lie?"

'Vyasa replied, "O fortunate one! You will be saved from a lie. This is eternal dharma. O king of Panchala! I will not reveal this matter before everyone. You will alone hear how this practice was established and why this should be regarded as old and eternal. There is no doubt that what Kounteya[22] has said is in accordance with dharma."'

Vaishampayana said, 'Then, the illustrious lord Dvaipyana Vyasa arose and, taking hold of the king's[23] hand, went into the king's palace. The Pandavas, Kunti and Parshata Dhrishtadyumna waited despondently for those two to return. Thereupon, Dvaipayana explained to the great-souled king how it came to be that these men's marriage with a single wife was in conformity with dharma.'

## 189

'Vyasa said, "O king! In ancient times, the gods performed a great sacrifice in Naimisha forest. There, Vivasvata's son[24] was the priest who killed the animals. O king! Since he

was consecrated in that role, Yama did not kill any creatures.[25] Since death and time were suspended among creatures, the number of beings increased greatly. Then Shakra,[26] Varuna, Kubera, the sadhyas, Rudra, the vasus, the Ashvins—these and other gods gathered together and went to Prajapati, the creator of the world. Alarmed at the increase in the number of humans, they assembled and addressed the preceptor of the worlds. 'We are trembling with fear. We wish to be happy again. We have come to seek protection with you.' Brahma replied, 'Why are you frightened of humans, when all of you are immortal? There should not be any fear in you from mortals.' The gods said, 'Since the mortals have become immortals, there is no difference any more. Upset at this equality, we have come to you to seek a distinction.' Brahma replied, 'Vivasvata's son is now engaged in the great sacrifice. It is for this reason that humans are not dying. When he has single-mindedly finished his sacrificial acts, death will again return among them. When that time comes, Vivasvata's son will be strengthened through your energies. When the time of death comes at the end, humans will have no energy left in them.' Hearing these words of the first-born god,[27] they[28] went where the gods were sacrificing. When those immensely strong ones assembled there, they saw a lotus[29] in the Bhagirathi.[30]

'"On seeing that lotus, they were surprised. Indra, chief among the warriors among them, went where the Ganga always issues and saw a lady as radiant as the fire. The lady had come there to fetch water and was immersed in the goddess Ganga. But she was weeping and teardrops fell from her eyes into the water and became golden lotuses. On seeing this wonderful sight, the wielder of the vajra[31] went up to the lady and asked, 'Who are you and why are you crying? I want to know the truth. If you wish, please tell me.' The woman replied, 'O Shakra![32] I am unfortunate and you may know who I am and why I am weeping. O king! I will lead the way. Come with me and you will yourself see why I am crying.' He[33] followed her and soon saw a handsome young man. He was surrounded by young women, was seated on a throne and was playing dice on the peak of the king of mountains.[34]

'"The king[35] of the gods spoke to him, 'Know that this universe and this world are under my sway. Know me to be the lord of everything.' But the person took no notice of what he had said and continued to be immersed in the dice. Indra became angry and repeated what he had said. On seeing that Shakra was angry, that god cast a glance at him and smiled. At that glance, the king of the gods was paralysed and stood motionless at the spot, like a pillar. When the game of dice was over, he[36] spoke to the weeping goddess, 'Bring him here. I will make sure that pride never enters his heart again.' As soon as the woman had touched him, Shakra's limbs were paralysed and he fell down on the ground. Then the god with the fierce energy told him, 'O Shakra! Never act like this

again. Remove this great king of the mountains, because your strength and energy are beyond measurement. Enter the centre of the hole and wait with the others, who are like you and the sun in splendour.' He[37] rolled away the peak of the great mountain and saw four others who were like him in radiance. On seeing them, he was extremely saddened and said, 'Shall I also become like them?' Then, the god Girisha[38] looked at the wielder of the vajra with eyes dilated with anger and said, 'O Shatakratu![39] Enter this cavern, because in your folly, you have insulted me in front of my eyes.' Thus addressed by the lord, the king of the gods shuddered and shook, because of the curse. His limbs went limp, like the leaf of a fig tree stirred by the wind on the peak of the king of the mountains.

'"Shuddering at the god's sudden words, he[40] joined his palms and told the terrible god who has many manifestations, 'O Bhava![41] Show me a way out today.' Smilingly, the god with the terrible bow replied, 'Those who act like this, do not find an escape. These others were like you and will become again. Therefore, enter the cavern and lie down there. There is no doubt that all your fates will be the same. All of you will have to be born in human wombs. Having achieved great feats of violence there and having sent a large number towards their deaths, you will again attain the world of Indra through the merit of your actions. You will achieve all that I have said and much more, with varied significance.' The earlier Indras said, 'We will go from the world of gods to that of men. Salvation is difficult to obtain there. Let the gods Dharma, Vayu, Maghavan[42] and the Ashvins beget us on our mother.' Having heard this, the wielder of the vajra once again spoke to the greatest of the gods,[43] 'With my semen, I will create a man who can accomplish this task. He will be my son and will be the fifth among these.' In his good nature, the illustrious lord with the terrible bow granted them the wishes they desired. He ordained that the woman, the most beautiful in the worlds, who was none other than Shri[44] herself, would be their wife in the world of men. Thereafter, accompanied by them,[45] he[46] went to the god Narayana, who is beyond measure. He[47] approved of everything and thus it was that they were born on earth.

'"Hari[48] plucked two hairs from his body. One was white and the other was black. These two hairs entered the wombs of two women from the Yadu lineage, Rohini and Devaki. One of them[49] became Baladeva and the second one that was black became Keshava. Those ones who were like Shakra and were earlier confined in the mountain cavern are none other than the valorous Pandavas, while the Pandava Savyasachi[50] is a part of Shakra. O king! Thus it was that the former Indras were born as the Pandavas, and the celestial Lakshmi, earlier ordained to be their wife, was born as the divinely beautiful Droupadi. She whose radiance is like the sun and the moon and whose fragrance can be smelt from the distance of one krosha, cannot have arisen from the

earth. At the end of the sacrifice, she arose through divine intervention. O ruler of men! I will happily grant you a most wonderful boon. With this divine eyesight, behold Kunti's sons, in their earlier divine forms."'

Vaishampayana said, 'Then the pure Brahmana Vyasa, performer of extremely generous deeds, gave divine sight to the king through his ascetic powers. The king saw them in their earlier forms. He saw them divine and young, broad-chested and 5 cubits tall, adorned with golden garlands, crowns and jewels, with complexions as radiant as that of the fire or the sun, each resembling Shakra, dressed in divine garments that were beautiful and golden, resplendent with fragrant garlands that were the best, the equals of the three-eyed god,[51] the vasus and the celestial adityas, with every quality. On seeing the earlier Indras, King Drupada was surprised and pleased. With the power of divine maya that is beyond measure, he saw that supreme of women, Shri personified. In beauty, splendour and fame, he saw her to be the right wife for those Indras on earth. On seeing this wonderful sight, he touched the feet of Satyavati's son and said, with a tranquil mind, "O supreme rishi! For you, this is no wonder."

'Vyasa replied, "In a hermitage in a forest, there was once the daughter of a great-souled rishi, who was beautiful and pure, but could not get a husband. It is said that through her austerities, she pleased the god Shankara.[52] Pleased with her, the god himself spoke to her, 'Tell me what you want.' Thus addressed, she repeatedly told the boon-granting supreme god, 'I wish to have a husband who is accomplished in every way.' Then the god Shankara happily granted her the boon and said, 'O fortunate one! You will have five excellent husbands.' The one who had pleased the god said, 'O Shankara! I wish to have only one husband who possesses all the qualities.' The god of gods, extremely pleased with her, again uttered these holy words. 'You have addressed me five times, asking for a husband. O fortunate one! It shall be as you have asked. You will have good fortune and all this will happen in one of your future births.' O Drupada! So this daughter, with the form of a goddess, was born to you. Krishna Parshati[53] was preordained to be the wife of five and remain unblemished. The divine Shri was born out of the great sacrifice to be the wife of the Pandavas. After performing severe austerities, she was born as your daughter. O King Drupada! That resplendent goddess, sought after by the gods themselves, was ordained to be the wife of five through her own actions. She was created by the self-creating one[54] to be the wife of these gods. On hearing this, act as you wish."'

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'Drupada said, "O maharshi! I sought to act in the way that I had said only when I had not heard these words from you. I cannot act against what has been ordained. I wish to act as you have said. The knot tied by destiny cannot be untied. There is nothing that

results from our own actions. The rites set out for one husband must now become the rites for this rule.[55] Since Krishna herself repeatedly asked for many husbands in ancient times, the great god accordingly granted her the boon. The god himself knows what is best. Since Shankara has ordained it to be thus, dharma or adharma, I will commit no sin. Therefore, since Krishna is ordained to them, let them take her hand as they wish, according to the prescribed rites."'

Vaishampayana said, 'Then the great lord[56] spoke to Dharmaraja, "O son of Pandu! Today is an auspicious day. The moon has entered the constellation Pushya. Today, you accept Krishna's hand first." At that, King Yajnasena[57] and his son made arrangements for the wedding. He made ready a lot of wealth for the marriage. After she had bathed and had been adorned with many jewels, he brought out his daughter Krishna. To witness the marriage ceremony, the king's friends and relatives happily came there, with advisers and many Brahmanas and chief citizens. Crowded with those who had come for alms, the extensive festive grounds thick with lotuses and lilies, lined with heaps of precious stones, his palace looked like the sky, studded with brilliant stars. Then the young Kuru princes bathed. Adorned with earrings and ornaments, dressed in expensive garments and perfumed with sandalwood paste, they performed the preparatory ceremony and other auspicious rites. O lord! Accompanied by their priest Dhoumya, as radiant as the fire, they then joyfully entered, in due order and one after another, like mighty bulls entering a pen.

'Then the priest[58] who knew the Vedas built and lit the sacrificial fire and poured offerings, with mantras. He then called Yudhishthira and united him with Krishna. Then the Veda-knowing one married them, making them walk around the fire, hand in hand. Then the priest took leave of that ornament of battle[59] and went out of the palace. Then those maharathas, bringers of fame to the Kuru lineage, sons of a king among men, took the hand of that supreme among women, in succession, one day after another.[60] The devarshi[61] told me something extremely wonderful, beyond human powers. That slender-waisted and great lady regained her virginity from one day to another.[62]

'When the marriage was over, Drupada gave those maharathas a lot of gifts—100 supreme chariots adorned with gold, each yoked to four horses with golden bridles; 100 elephants with lotus marks on them, like a hundred mountains with golden peaks; and 100 young maidservants dressed in expensive garments and adorned with ornaments and garlands. Making the fire his witness, the king of the lunar dynasty,[63] befitting his might, separately gave each of those[64] a lot of wealth, garments and ornaments and other riches. When the marriage was over and the mighty Pandavas, the equals of Indra, had obtained their Shri, along with her great wealth, they lived in the city of the king of

Panchala.'

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Vaishampayana said, 'After his alliance with the Pandavas, Drupada's fears were dispelled. He did not even fear the gods. All the ladies in the great-souled Drupada's household came to Kunti. They mentioned their names and saluted her, with their foreheads touching her feet. Dressed in a silken garment and with the marriage thread still encircling her,[65] Krishna also paid her respects to her mother-in-law and stood before her, her palms joined.

'Lovingly, Pritha bestowed her blessings on Droupadi, endowed with beauty and auspicious marks and with a pure disposition and good character. "As Indrani[66] is to Harihaya,[67] as Svaha[68] is to Vibhavasu,[69] as Rohini[70] is to Soma,[71] as Damayanti is to Nala, as Bhadra[72] is to Vaishravana,[73] as Arundhati is to Vashishtha and as Lakshmi is to Narayana, so may you be to your husbands. O fortunate one! May you be the mother of long-lived and valorous sons. May you be happy. May you be fortunate and prosperous. May you be strict in your vows and a wife to your husbands at the time of sacrifices. May you always pass your time serving your guests in the proper way—holy men, the aged, the young and your seniors. May you be anointed queen, with the righteous king,[74] in the kingdom and the capital of Kurujangala. Let the entire earth be conquered by your immensely powerful husbands and presented to Brahmanas in a great horse-sacrifice. O accomplished one! O treasure of all virtues! May all the riches of the world belong to you. May you be happy for 100 autumns. O daughter-in-law! I bless you today on seeing you in silken garments. I shall bless you again when you have given birth to a son with all the qualities."

'After the Pandavas had taken a wife, Hari[75] sent them many golden ornaments, adorned with pearls and lapis lazuli. Madhava[76] also sent them expensive garments from many regions, blankets, deer skins, jewels that were beautiful and soft, and expensive beds, seats, vehicles and vessels, adorned with diamonds and lapis lazuli. Krishna also gave them thousands of young maidservants, adorned with ornaments, beautiful, accomplished and brought from many regions, well trained, and tame elephants, many excellent and caparisoned horses and many chariots, drawn by horses with large teeth and excellent colours, bedecked with golden cloth. And Madhusudana,[77] whose soul cannot be measured, also sent them in a separate heap crores of pure gold coins. In a desire to please Govinda,[78] Dharmaraja Yudhishthira, who was filled with pure joy, accepted all this.'

# Section Fourteen

## Viduragamana Parva

*This parva has 174 shlokas and seven chapters.*

*Chapter 192: 29 shlokas*
*Chapter 193: 19 shlokas*
*Chapter 194: 25 shlokas*
*Chapter 195: 19 shlokas*
*Chapter 196: 28 shlokas*
*Chapter 197: 29 shlokas*
*Chapter 198: 25 shlokas*

Agamana *means arrival or coming and this parva is about Vidura's arrival.*

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Vaishampayana said, 'Then trusted spies brought the news to the kings that the beautiful and fortunate Droupadi had got the Pandavas as her husbands and that the great-souled one who had strung the bow and had pierced the target was Arjuna, greatest among those who are victorious and a mighty wielder of the bow and arrows. The great-souled and strong one who had lifted up Shalya, the king of Madra, and had whirled him around and had frightened all men in the fight with a tree, himself without fear, was none other than Bhima, whose touch was terrible and who was the tormentor of armies of enemies. When they heard that Kunti's and Pandu's sons had assumed the disguise of peaceful Brahmanas, those rulers of men were greatly surprised, because they had earlier heard that Kunti and her sons had been burnt alive in the house of lac. Those rulers of men therefore regarded them[1] as having been born again. Remembering the extremely cruel deed of Purochana, they cursed Bhishma and the Kourava Dhritarashtra. When the svayamvara was over, all the kings learnt that the Pandavas had been chosen and returned the way they had come.

'On seeing that Arjuna, who was borne by white horses, had been chosen by Droupadi, King Duryodhana was very depressed and returned with his brothers, Ashvatthama, his maternal uncle,[2] Karna and Kripa. Full of shame, Duhshasana softly spoke to him, "O king! If Dhananjaya[3] had not been disguised as a Brahmana, he would never have succeeded in obtaining Droupadi. No one recognized him because of that. I think destiny is supreme and human endeavours are fruitless. O brother! Cursed be our human endeavours when the Pandavas are still alive." Thus, talking to one another and blaming Purochana, they entered Hastinapura, miserable and downcast. They were frightened and all their resolutions disappeared when they discovered that the

immensely powerful sons of Pritha[4] had escaped the fire and were allied with Drupada. They thought of Dhrishtadyumna, Shikhandi and all the other sons of Drupada, all skilled in the art of war.

'On learning that Droupadi had chosen the Pandavas and that Dhritarashtra's sons had returned in shame, their pride broken, Vidura was very happy. O lord of the people! The kshatta went to Dhritarashtra and said in great wonder, "The Kurus[5] are prospering from good fortune." O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On hearing this from Vidura, Dhritarashtra, the son of Vichitravirya, was overjoyed and exclaimed, "What great fortune!" In his ignorance, the king of men, who only possessed the eyesight of knowledge, had thought that Droupadi had chosen his eldest son, Duryodhana. He ordered that many ornaments be made for Droupadi and sent word to his son Duryodhana that Krishna[6] should be brought in. It was then that Vidura told him that the Pandavas had been chosen, that those warriors were all in good health and that they had been duly honoured by Drupada. They had many allies and relatives now, with large armies.

'Dhritarashtra said, "Pandu's sons are dearer to me than they were to Pandu. O Vidura! My joy is greater, now that I know that those brave Pandavas are in good health, with friends. O kshatta! Which king, deprived of fortune on earth and in search of power, would not desire to have an alliance with Drupada and his relatives?"'

Vaishampayana said, 'When the king uttered such words, Vidura replied, "O king! May this intelligence of yours last for a hundred years." O ruler of the people! Then Duryodhana and Radha's son[7] came to Dhritarashtra and told him, "We cannot speak in Vidura's presence. We wish to speak to you in private. What do you want to do now? O father! Do you take the prosperity of your rivals to be that of your own? O supreme among men! You applauded them before the kshatta. O one who is unblemished! You act one way when another needs to be done. O father! We must always act in a way so as to weaken their strength. The time has come for us to counsel one another, so that they[8] do not swallow us up, with our sons, armies and relatives."'

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'Dhritarashtra said, "I myself have the worries that you do. But I do not wish to reveal my attitude to Vidura. Therefore, I particularly praised their qualities, so that Vidura does not know my true wishes, even through a gesture. This is the time. O Suyodhana![9] Tell me what you think. O Radheya![10] You also tell me what you think."

'Duryodhana said, "Let us now use skilled and able Brahmanas who have our trust to create conflict among the Pandavas, between the sons of Kunti and the sons of Madri. Or let us tempt King Drupada, his sons and all his advisers with large presents of wealth

so that they abandon Kunti's son, King Yudhishthira. Or let them[11] individually be told how difficult it is to live here,[12] so that the Pandavas decide to live there,[13] away from us. Or let artful and skilled men create dissension among the sons of Pritha.[14] Or let them[15] incite Krishna[16] against them. That should be easy, because they are many.[17] Let the Pandavas be dissatisfied with her, and she with them. O king! Let artful and skilled men secretly bring about Bhimasena's death. He is the strongest among them. O king! When he is dead, they will lose their enterprise and their energy. Without him, they will no longer wish for the kingdom, because he is their only support. Arjuna is invincible in battle as long as he is supported from the back by Vrikodara.[18] Without him, Phalguna[19] is not even worth a fourth of Radheya[20] in battle. With Bhimasena dead, they will know their great weakness and knowing our great strength, the feeble ones will perish. O king! If the sons of Pritha come here and submit themselves to our desires, we can confidently destroy them. Or, one after another, we can seduce them with pretty women so that Krishna[21] is disenchanted with Kunti's sons. Or we can send Radheya to bring them here and on the way here, get them killed through an attack by dacoits whom we trust. Employ, without delay, whichever of these strategies seems to you to be faultless. Time passes. As long as their confidence in King Drupada, who is like a bull, is not established, until then, we can succeed. But not afterwards. O father! These are my views. We should suppress them. O Radheya! What do you think? Are these views good or bad?"'

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'Karna said, "O Duryodhana! In my view, your opinions are not distinguished by wisdom. O extender of the Kuru lineage! The Pandavas cannot be overcome through trickery. O brave warrior! In the past, you have used subtle tricks to suppress them, but you did not succeed. O king! Then they lived near you and were children who had not developed friends and allies. But you could not hold them down. They now live far away and have grown up. They have developed friends and allies. It is my firm conviction that Kunti's sons cannot be injured through trickery. Nor can they be subjugated through vices, because they are protected by fate. They desire to have the kingdom of their fathers and grandfathers back. We can't injure them through such means. It is impossible to create dissension among them. It is impossible to create dissension among those who have taken a common wife. Nor will we succeed in alienating Krishna[22] from them. She chose them in a time of adversity and they are now prosperous. Women have a quality that they desire many husbands. Krishna has got this and can't be alienated. The king of Panchala[23] is virtuous and does not crave for riches. Even if we give him our entire kingdom, it is certain that he will not desert the sons of Kunti. His son[24] also

has all the good qualities and is attached to the Pandavas. Therefore, I do not think that any subtle strategy that you think of will ever be able to injure them.

'"O bull among men! But today, this is what is good and advisable for us. O lord of the earth! The Pandavas can be struck down as long as they have not established their roots. O lord! Agree to smite them with arms. As long as our side is strong and that of the Panchalas is weak, we should strike them with arms, without hesitation. O son of Gandhari! Strike them with arms quickly and with valour, before their chariots, their friends and their relatives gather. O king! Display your valour before the king of Panchala and his immensely brave son decide to take action. Show your valour before Varshneya[25] arrives with his Yadava army to restore the Pandavas to their kingdom. O ruler of the earth! Riches, diverse objects of pleasure, kingdoms—there is nothing that Krishna will not sacrifice for the sake of the Pandavas. The great-souled Bharata[26] acquired the earth through his valour. The slayer of Paka[27] obtained lordship of the three worlds through his valour. O lord of the earth! Valour is always praised among Kshatriyas. O bull among kings! Valour is the natural dharma of those who are brave. O king! Therefore, without any more delay, let us defeat Drupada with a large army with four components[28] and bring the Pandavas here. The Pandavas cannot be defeated through conciliation, gifts or dissension. Therefore, vanquish them with your valour. O ruler of men! After defeating them through your valour, rule over the extensive earth. I do not see any other way of accomplishing our objective."'

Vaishampayana said, 'On hearing Radheya's words, the immensely powerful Dhritarashtra praised him and said, "O son of a suta! You are blessed with great wisdom and are skilled in the use of weapons. Such words that speak of valour are worthy of you. But let Bhishma, Drona, Vidura and the two of you consult each other and arrive at a course of action that is the best for our welfare." Thereupon, the immensely famous King Dhritarashtra summoned all his advisers and consulted them.'

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'Bhishma said, "I will never agree to a war with Pandu's sons. There is no doubt that Pandu was as dear to me as Dhritarashtra is. To me, the sons of Gandhari are like the sons of Kunti. O Dhritarashtra! They must be protected as much by me as by you. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Like they are to me and the king,[29] they should be the same way to Duryodhana and the other sons of Kuru. Therefore, I can never favour a war with them. Have a treaty with those warriors and give them land. For those best of the Kurus,[30] there is no doubt that this is the kingdom of their fathers and grandfathers. O Duryodhana! Just as you consider this kingdom to be your parental property, the Pandavas also see it as their paternal property. If the Pandavas, who practise austerities, cannot get this kingdom, how can it be yours or of anyone from the

Bharata lineage? O bull among the Bharatas! If you think that you have acquired this kingdom through what is right, I think that they rightfully think that they obtained the kingdom before you. O tiger among men! Peacefully give them half of the kingdom. That will be the best for everyone. If you act in any other way, no good will come out of it. There is no doubt that you will be covered in dishonour.

'"Try to preserve your good reputation. A good reputation is the source of supreme strength. It is said that a man who has lost his reputation, lives in vain. O son of Gandhari! O descendant of Kuru! As long as a man's good reputation lasts, he does not die. He is destroyed when his good reputation is lost. Therefore, follow the dharma that is worthy of the Kuru lineage. O one with mighty arms! Act as your ancestors have acted before you. It is fortunate that those warriors are alive. It is fortunate that Pritha is alive. It is fortunate that the evil Purochana himself perished, without being successful. O son of Gandhari! From the time I heard what had happened to the sons of Kunti, I was not able to look at any living being. O tiger among men! People do not think Purochana as guilty as they think you. O king! Therefore, the escape of the Pandavas from that destruction and their reappearance is something that should be wished for. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! Know that as long as those warriors are alive, the wielder of the vajra[31] himself cannot deprive them of their paternal property, because they are established in dharma and are united. They have been deprived of an equal share in the kingdom through adharma. If you wish to act in accordance with dharma, if you wish to do that which pleases me, if you wish to do that which is good, give them half."'

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'Drona said, "O king! It has been heard that Dhritarashtra's friends who have been summoned for consultation should always speak that which is right and true and brings fame. My views are the same as those of the great-souled Bhishma. Let Kunti's sons have a share in the kingdom. That is eternal dharma. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Send a soft-spoken man to Drupada. Let him carry many riches for them. Let him carry many expensive presents with him. Let him speak to him[32] in good fortune that comes about because of this alliance. O king! O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Let him repeatedly tell Drupada and Dhrishtadyumna that both you and Duryodhana are extremely pleased with what has happened. Let him say that this alliance is appropriate and pleasing. Let him repeatedly pacify the sons of Kunti and the sons of Madri. O king of kings! On your command, let him present Droupadi with many brilliant and golden ornaments. O bull among the Bharata lineage! Let presents also be given to all the sons of Drupada and appropriate ones to all the Pandavas and Kunti. Thus pacifying Drupada and the Pandavas, he should immediately propose their return.[33] When those

warriors receive the permission to return, let Duhshasana and Vikarna[34] go to receive them with a magnificent army. O best of kings! Let the sons of Pandu always be treated by you with honour. As desired by the people, let them be instated in their ancestral kingdom. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! O king! Bhishma and I believe that this should be your conduct towards the Pandavas, who are like your own sons."

'Karna said, "These two[35] have always been sustained, in all their actions, through your riches and your honour. What can be more surprising than that they should now offer advice that is not for your own good? How can the wise accept advice that is apparently good, rendered by a man with malice in his heart, though he hides his true intentions? In times of adversity, friends can neither do that which is good, nor that which is harmful. A man's misery or happiness depends on destiny alone. A wise one, a fool, an old man, a child, one who has friends and one who has none finds anything anywhere. We have heard that in earlier times, there was a king named Ambuvicha. He was the king in Rajagriha and ruled over Magadha. He was a king who had no abilities. All that he did was to breathe air in and out. All his affairs were in the hands of his ministers. He had a minister named Mahakarni, who became the sole lord and thanks to the authority he had obtained, began to dishonour the king. That fool appropriated for himself everything that belonged to the king—his objects of desire, his women, his jewels, his riches and all his power. But having obtained all this, his avarice only increased and having appropriated everything else, he coveted the kingdom. We have heard that the king had no abilities, he only breathed air. But despite this, and despite all his attempts, he[36] could not take the kingdom away from him.[37] O lord of the people! There was no human endeavour in him.[38] The kingdom was his through destiny. If this kingdom is yours through destiny, it will remain with you without a doubt, notwithstanding the enmity of all the worlds. But if ordained otherwise, it will never remain with you, no matter how much you try. You are learned. Therefore, remembering all this, judging the honesty and dishonesty of your advisers, weigh the advice of those who have spoken for the good and those who have spoken for evil."

'Drona said, "We know that you say this out of malice and the reasons for that. You are wicked and to bring injury to the Pandavas, you find fault with us. O Karna! Know that what I have said is for the supreme welfare of everyone, for the propagation of the Kuru lineage. If you think this leads to evil, tell us that which brings supreme welfare. If my advice, leading to the supreme welfare I have described, is not followed, it is my opinion that the lineage of the Kurus will soon be destroyed."'

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'Vidura said, "O king! There is no doubt that your friends have spoken that which brings your greatest welfare. But words do not remain with those who are unwilling to listen.

O king! Bhishma, the son of Shantanu and supreme among the Kurus, has spoken that which is for your greatest welfare. But you do not accept it. In many ways, Drona also said that which is for your welfare. But Karna, the son of Radha, does not believe this to be good for you. O king! After thinking about it, I do not find anyone who is a better friend to you than these two[39] lions among men, supreme in their wisdom. These two are old in age, in wisdom and in their knowledge of the sacred texts. O lord over kings! They regard the sons of Pandu with equal eyes. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! O king! There is no doubt that in virtue and truthfulness, they are not inferior to Rama, the son of Dasharatha, or Gaya.[40] Never before have they given you bad advice. Nor have they ever done that which brings you injury. Therefore, why should these tigers among men, whose strength comes from their truthfulness, give you advice that is not for your welfare? O ruler of men! These best of men are known in this world for their wisdom. They will never give you bad advice, nor say that which is wicked. O descendant of the Kuru lineage! It is my firm conviction that these two, well versed in what is right, will not take either side for the sake of personal gain. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! I consider this to bring the greatest welfare to you. O king! There is no doubt that the Pandavas are your sons, as Duryodhana and the others are.

'"Therefore, those advisers who unwisely advise you against them, don't really have your interests at heart. O king! If you have partiality in your heart,[41] it is certain it does you no good to encourage your inner feelings. O king! Therefore, I certainly do not think that those two great-souled and illustrious ones have said anything that leads to evil. However, you are not inclined towards that. O tiger among men! What those bulls among men have said about their[42] invincibility is quite true. May you be fortunate. O king! Can the handsome Pandava, Savyasachi Dhananjaya,[43] ever be vanquished in battle by Maghavan[44] himself? Can the great Bhimasena, with strong arms and the strength of 10,000 elephants, ever be vanquished in battle by the gods? Can anyone who wishes to live vanquish in battle the twins,[45] well skilled in battle and like the sons of Yama himself? How can the eldest Pandava, in whom patience, compassion, mercy, truthfulness and valour are always present, ever be vanquished in war? With Rama[46] on their side, Janardana[47] as their adviser and Satyaki as their supporter, is there anyone whom they have not already vanquished in battle? Drupada is their father-in-law. Drupada's son, Parshata Dhrishtadyumna and his other brave brothers are their brothers-in-law. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Knowing that they cannot be vanquished and knowing that their claim to the kingdom is prior to yours, you must act towards them in accordance with dharma.

'"O king! On account of the act of Purochana, you have been stained by great infamy. You must cleanse yourself of that by behaving kindly towards them. O king! We have

earlier waged a great war with King Drupada. Our side will be strengthened if we can get him as an ally. O ruler of the people! The Dasharhas[48] are powerful and numerous. They will be where Krishna is. And where Krishna is, victory will certainly be there. O king! Unless cursed by destiny, who seeks to obtain through war that which can be obtained through conciliation? O king! Having heard that Pritha's[49] sons are alive, the inhabitants of the city and the country are extremely happy and eager to see them. Do what is pleasing to them. Duryodhana, Karna and Shakuni, the son of Subala, are evil, foolish and young. Do not listen to their words. O king endowed with all the qualities! Long ago, I told you that this kingdom and its subjects will be destroyed through Duryodhana's fault."'

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'Dhritarashtra said, "Shantanu's son, the learned Bhishma, the illustrious rishi Drona and you yourself have spoken the truth and that which is best for me. There is no doubt that since those maharathas, the sons of Kunti, are the sons of Pandu, they are also my sons according to dharma. Since my sons are entitled to this kingdom, there is no doubt that Pandu's sons are also entitled to this kingdom. O kshatta![50] Go and honourably bring them[51] and their mother here. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Also bring with them Krishna[52] of divine beauty. It is through good fortune that the sons of Pritha are alive. It is through good fortune that Pritha is alive. It is through good fortune that those maharathas have obtained Drupada's daughter. It is through good fortune that our strength has increased. It is through good fortune that Purochana is dead. O greatly radiant one! It is through good fortune that my great grief has been dispelled."'

Vaishampayana said, 'O descendant of the Bharata lineage! Thereupon, on Dhritarashtra's command, Vidura went to Yajnasena[53] and the Pandavas. O king! Having gone there, that righteous man, learned in all the shastras, addressed Drupada appropriately and waited on him. He[54] too received Vidura in the appropriate way and they courteously asked about each other's welfare. O descendant of the Bharata lineage! He[55] saw there the Pandavas and Vasudeva.[56] He embraced them lovingly and asked about their welfare. One after another, they worshipped Vidura, who was immensely wise. O king! On Dhritarashtra's instructions, he repeatedly and affectionately asked Pandu's sons about their welfare. O lord of the people! He then gave the Pandavas, Kunti, Droupadi and Drupada's sons the many jewels and other riches that had been sent by the Kouravas through him.

'In the presence of the Pandavas and Keshava,[57] the supremely wise Vidura then addressed Drupada in modest words of affection. "O king! Listen to my words with your sons and ministers. Dhritarashtra, his sons, his ministers and his relatives have

repeatedly and happily enquired about your welfare. O lord of men! He is delighted with this alliance with you. The immensely wise Bhishma, the son of Shantanu, and all the other Kouravas have enquired about your welfare in every way. The great archer Drona, the son of Bharadvaja and your beloved friend, has enquired about your welfare, embracing you. O king of Panchala! Dhritarashtra and all the other Kouravas regard themselves as fortunate at this alliance with you. O Yajnasena! This alliance with you has given them greater pleasure than acquiring a new kingdom.

'"O lord! Knowing all this, you must allow the Pandavas to depart. The Kurus are extremely eager to see Pandu's sons. These bulls among men have been away from home for a long time. They and Pritha must be eager to see their city. All the chief women of the Kuru lineage and all the inhabitants of the city and the country are waiting to see the Panchala princess, Krishna. O illustrious one! It is my view that without any more delay, you should issue instructions for the Pandavas to go there[58] with their wife. O king! When the great-souled Pandavas have got your permission, I shall send word to Dhritarashtra through swift messengers, and the sons of Kunti can leave, with Kunti and Krishna."'

# Section Fifteen

## Rajya-labha Parva

*This parva has a single chapter and there are only fifty shlokas.* Rajya-labha *means the acquisition of the kingdom.*

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'Drupada said, "O greatly learned Vidura! It is indeed as you have told me now. O lord! I am also greatly delighted at the alliance that we have just concluded. It is proper that these great-souled brothers should now return home. But it is not proper that I should say this myself, in my own words. If that is what the brave Yudhishthira, son of Kunti, Bhimasena and Arjuna, the twins,[1] who are bulls among men, and Rama[2] and Krishna, learned in the precepts of the law, desire, then the Pandavas should go there. Those two tigers among men[3] are always engaged in that which is good for them."[4]

'Yudhishthira said, "O king! My followers and I are now dependent on you. We will do that which you tell us is for our own good."'

Vaishampayana said, 'At that, Vasudeva said, "I am of the view that they should go. But we must go by what King Drupada, who knows everything about the law, suggests." Drupada replied, "Having thought about all the circumstances, my views are in agreement with what the mighty-armed and valiant Dasharha,[5] supreme among men, thinks. The time is right. There is no doubt that the greatly fortunate sons of Kunti, the sons of Pandu, are now as dear to me as they are to Vasudeva himself. Yudhishthira, Kunti's son and the son of Dharma, himself does not seek their welfare as much as Keshava, tiger among men, does." Then the great-souled Drupada gave them leave to depart. The Pandavas, Krishna and the extremely wise Vidura took with them Droupadi Krishna and the illustrious Kunti, and with pleasure and a leisurely pace, travelled towards the city of Hastinapura.[6]

'O descendant of the Bharata lineage! On hearing that the warriors were coming, Kourava Dhritarashtra sent the Kouravas to receive the Pandavas—the great archer Vikarna, Chitrasena, the supreme archer Drona and Kripa, the son of Goutama. Then, surrounded by them, the maharatha and radiant warriors slowly entered the city of Hastinapura, their resplendence increasing. Those tigers among men were freed from their grief and sorrow. The city became radiant with wonder. Dear to the hearts of the people, the Pandavas heard loud exclamations from the citizens, always eager to do what was dear to them.[7] "The tiger among men, the one of righteous conduct,[8] has returned. He always protected us with the rule of law, as if we were his near relatives. It

seems without doubt as if the great King Pandu, who loved the forest, has returned today from the forest, to do that which pleases us and is good for our welfare. Can there be any greater joy for us, now that the brave sons of Kunti have returned to the city? If we have given alms and sacrificial offerings, if we have performed austerities, let the Pandavas remain in the city for a hundred autumns." They[9] worshipped the feet of Dhritarashtra, Bhishma and others who deserved it, and asking about the welfare of everyone in the city, entered the place earmarked for them at Dhritarashtra's command.

'When those immensely strong and great souls had rested for some time, they were summoned by King Dhritarashtra and the son of Shantanu.[10] Dhritarashtra said, "O son of Kunti![11] Listen with your brothers to what I have to say. So that strife does not arise again, go to Khandavaprastha. No one can harm you there, if you are protected there by Partha, as the thirty gods are by the wielder of the vajra.[12] Go to Khandavaprastha and take half the kingdom." Those bulls among men accepted the king's words and saluting everyone set out for that terrible forest. Having received half the kingdom, they entered Khandavaprastha.

'With Krishna leading them, the invincible Pandavas went there and made it as beautiful a place as heaven. Led by Dvaipayana, the maharathas selected a pure and holy place, performed propitiatory ceremonies and measured out the land for a city. It was surrounded by moats as wide as the ocean and walls that rose high up into the sky. It was white like the clouds and like snow-covered mountains. This greatest of cities was as resplendent as Bhogavati[13] of the nagas. It was protected by terrible double-doored gates that were like two-winged Garudas. The high towers were like dense clouds, like many Mandara mountains. It was well covered with many weapons, with sharp spears and javelins like double-tongued snakes and impenetrable to the weapons of enemies. The splendid and spiralling turrets were guarded by warriors and well stocked with weapons of attack. There were many sharp hooks and shataghnis[14] and other weapons of war. Great iron chakras adorned that best of cities. The streets were wide and well laid out, preventing collisions among large chariots. It shone with many beautiful white mansions. Like a mass of dense clouds circled by lightning and reflecting the image of heaven, it came to be known as Indraprastha.

'"In that lovely and beautiful place was the dwelling of the Kouravas.[15] It was full of every kind of treasure, like the palace of the treasurer[16] himself. O king! Brahmanas, the best of those who knew all the Vedas, went there. It was a desired habitation for those who knew all the tongues. Desiring to earn wealth, many merchants from every direction went there. Desirous of living there, came many artisans of every craft. Lovely gardens surrounded the city, with *amras,*[17]*amratakas,*[18]*nipas,*[19]
ashokas,[20]*champakas,*[21]*punnagas,*[22]*nagapushpas,*[23]*lakuchas,*[24]*panasas,*[25]

shalas,[26] *talas,*[27] *kadambas,*[28] *bakulas*[29] and *ketakas.*[30] These trees were beautiful, full of flowers, and bent down with the burden of their fruit. *Amlokas,*[31] *lodhras,*[32] blossoming *ankolas,*[33] *jambus,*[34] *patalas,*[35] *kubjakas,*[36] *atimuktakas,*[37] *karaviras,*[38] *parijatas*[39] and many other kinds of trees were there, always adorned with flowers and fruit and swarming with many different kinds of birds. There echoed the calls of frenzied peacocks and delighted cuckoos. There were houses that were as white as mirrors and bowers full of creepers. There were artificial hillocks designed to bring pleasure. There were ponds filled with clear water and charming lakes that were fragrant with lotuses and water lilies and adorned with many swans, geese and chakravaka[40] birds. The beautiful ponds were surrounded by many trees and there were many beautiful and large tanks.

'O great king! Living in that large kingdom populated by holy people, the joy of the Pandavas continued to increase eternally. Thus, because of the righteous conduct of Bhishma and the king,[41] the Pandavas came to live in Khandavaprastha. With the five great archers,[42] each like an Indra, that best of cities was adorned like Bhogavati of the nagas. O king! Having settled them there and taking the consent of the Pandavas, the brave Keshava, with Rama,[43] then went to Dvaravati.'[44]

The second volume will recount Arjuna's banishment, Subhadra's marriage to Arjuna, the burning of the Khandava forest, the building of a magnificent assembly hall for the Pandavas, the conquest of the world by the Pandavas, the slayings of Jarasandha and Shishupala and then the game with dice, leading finally to the banishment of the Pandavas.

# Acknowledgements

Carving time out from one's regular schedule and work engagements to embark on such a mammoth work of translation has been difficult. The past tense should not be used, since only 10 per cent of the road has yet been traversed. Sometimes, I wish I had been born in nineteenth-century Bengal, with a benefactor funding me for doing nothing but this. But alas, the days of gentlemen of leisure are long over. The time could not be carved out from professional engagements, barring of course assorted television channels, who must have wondered why I have been so reluctant to head for their studios in the evenings. It was ascribed to health, interpreted as adverse health. It was certainly health, but not in an adverse sense. Reading the Mahabharata is good for one's mental health and is an activity to be recommended, without any statutory warnings. The time was stolen in the evenings and over weekends. The cost was therefore borne by one's immediate family, and to a lesser extent by friends. Socializing was reduced, since every dinner meant one less chapter done. The family has first claim on the debt, though I am sure it also has claim on whatever merits are due. At least Suparna does, and these volumes are therefore dedicated to her. I suspect Sirius has no claim on the merits, though he has been remarkably patient at the times when he has been curled up near my feet and I have been translating away. There is some allegory there about a dog keeping company when the Mahabharata is being read and translated.

Most people have thought I was mad, even if they never quite said that. Among those who believed and thought it was worthwhile, beyond immediate family, are Ashok Desai, Pratap Bhanu Mehta and Laveesh Bhandari. And my sons, Nihshanka and Vidroha. I know I didn't run the translations by you first. I wanted you to wait for the final product. But thank you for believing that I would be able to do it. Incidentally, I wouldn't have been able to do it without Vaman Shivram Apte. When he compiled the student's Sanskrit dictionary more than a hundred years ago in Pune, I am certain he had no idea that it would be used so comprehensively to translate the Mahabharata.

Penguin also believed. My initial hesitation about being able to deliver was brushed aside by R. Sivapriya, who pushed me after the series had been commissioned. And then Sumitra Srinivasan became the editor and the enthusiasm of these two was so infectious that everything just snowballed. Sumitra claims she doesn't know much about Indian mythology. This was just as well, because she kept raising so many irritating questions about the copy that we have ended up with a much better product from the point of view of the lay reader. If the first volume is so clean and clear editorially, the reader must realize that this isn't quite the product I produced. This is the outcome of a Sumitra Srinivasan editorial churning.

When I first embarked on what was also a personal voyage of sorts, the end was

never in sight and seemed to stretch to infinity. Now that 10 per cent is over (and 10 per cent more is in the pipeline), the horizon can be seen. And all the people mentioned above have had a role to play in this journey.

[1] Brahmana is a text and also the word used for the highest caste.

[2] A class of religious and philosophical texts that are composed in the forest, or are meant to be studied when one retires to the forest.

[3] The six Vedangas are *shiksha* (articulation and pronunciation), *chhanda* (prosody), *vyakarana* (grammar), *nirukta* (etymology), *jyotisha* (astronomy) and *kalpa* (rituals).

[4] Religion, duty.

[5] Wealth. But in general, any object of the senses.

[6] Desire.

[7] Release from the cycle of rebirth.

[9] Krishna or Krishnaa is another name for Droupadi.

[1] The word !‘jaya’ means victory and was also the title of an original and shorter version of the Mahabharata. So this invocation, which is not part of the main text, can be interpreted in two different ways—a literal uttering of the word ‘victory’ or a recital of the Mahabharata.

[2] Nara and Narayana were ancient sages, invariably referred to together. But Narayana eventually came to be identified with Vishnu (hence Krishna) and Nara with Arjuna.

[3] Head or chief. But in this context, a sage who feeds and teaches 10,000 students.

[4] A sacred forest.

[5] A suta was the son of a Kshatriya father and a Brahmana mother and by profession sutas were charioteers. But they were also bards and raconteurs.

[6] The Puranas are sacred texts, composed by the sage Vyasadeva. There are eighteen major Puranas.

[7] Arjuna’s grandson and Abhimanyu’s son.

[8] Vedavyasa or Vyasadeva, thus named because he classified the Vedas. Vedavyasa or Vyasadeva is a title and there has been more than one sage with such a title. This particular Vedavyasa’s name was Krishna Dvaipayana: Krishna because he was dark in complexion and Dvaipayana because he was born on an island (*dvipa*).

[9] Meaning the first three castes: Brahmanas, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas. Twice-born (*dvija*) is also used specifically for Brahmanas, the second birth referring to the donning of the sacred thread. The first three castes were all entitled to this right.

[10] Sages with knowledge of the supreme being (brahman).

[11] Sacred texts, four in number: Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda.

[12] Sacred texts.

[13] Ruler, master, lord. Ishana is a name for Shiva, Vishnu, even the sun. But here, the general meaning is intended.

[14] The word brahman or *paramatman* refers to the supreme spirit and should not be confused with Brahmana, though they have the same etymological root.

[15] Class of gods.

[16] Royal sages. Brahmarshis were of the Brahmana caste. Rajarshis were Kshatriyas, but obtained the status of being a sage (*rishi*) through their learning.

[17] Union between the human soul and the supreme being.

[18] Knowledge obtained through self-realization.

[19] Sacred texts in the category of revelation.

[20] Collections of sacred texts, particularly in verse form, specifically the Vedas.

[21] Bhishma.

[22] That is, impregnated Vichitravirya's wife.

[23] Death.

[24] Krishna's name, as the son of Vasudeva.

[25] These are two (Asita and Devala) ancient sages, whose names always occur together.

[26] A semi-divine species, singers and musicians of the gods.

[27] Nakula and Sahadeva.

[28] Kunti.

[29] Kunti and Madri.

[30] Indra.

[31] Those in the celibate stage of life.

[32] Arjuna.

[33] Droupadi.

[34] Yudhishthira.

[35] A great sacrifice, at the time of coronation, when other kings and princes pay tribute and accept the superiority of the crowned universal monarch.

[36] Shishupala.

[37] Droupadi.

[38] Krishna and Balarama.

[39] Shakuni.

[40] A Brahmana who has finished his period of study and celibacy (brahmacharya) and is about to enter (or just entered) the householder stage (garhasthya) is known as a snataka.

[41] Yudhishthira.

[42] Kubera.

[43] Yudhishthira.

[44] Virata.

[45] A large army with 21,870 chariots, 21,870 elephants, 65,610 horses and 109,350 foot soldiers.

[46] This is a reference to the fifth incarnation of Vishnu, when in the form of a *vamana* (dwarf), he had humbled the demon king Bali.

[47] Krishna.

[48] Kunti.

[49] Dronacharya.

[50] Instead of tens of thousands, this can also be translated as many.

[51] Warriors from the Panchala region.

[52] Venus, also a sage.

[53] The sun.

[54] There was a hierarchy of warriors. *Maharatha* can loosely be translated as great warrior. However, more specifically, a maharatha was a warrior who could take on ten thousand warriors single-handed.

[55] Warriors who had taken an oath never to withdraw from the field of battle.

[56] Abhimanyu.

[57] Drona.

[58] Jayadratha.

[59] Arjuna.

[60] Satyaki.

[61] Arjuna.

[62] Ashvatthama.

[63] Shalya.

[64] Jayadratha.

[65] Indra was the king of the gods. The celestial spear (*shakti*) was given by Indra to Karna, though Karna is not mentioned by name in this shloka. The next shloka is explicit.

[66] Krishna.

[67] Arjuna.

[68] Karna.

[69] Ashvatthama.

[70] Ashvatthama.

[71] Shalya.

[72] Shakuni.

[73] That is, circuits of the club.

[74] Ashvatthama.

[75] Droupadi was Drupada's daughter and Drupada was the king of Panchala.

[76] Ashvatthama.

[77] Uttara.

[78] Akshouhinis.

[79] Sanjaya.

[80] Indra.

[81] Nishada means hunter.

[82] Earth, water, energy, wind and sky.

[83] *Sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*.

[84] Literally, history. More specifically, the two epics.

[85] Though sacred texts, the Vedas have been personified here.

[86] Reference here is to Krishna Dvaipayana (Vedavyasa).

[1] A very holy region, identified with the area around Kurukshetra.

[2] Two of the four *yugas* or eras, the four being *satya* (*krita*), *treta*, *dvapara* and *kali*.

[3] Reference is to Parashurama.

[4] Parashurama's paternal grandfather.

[5] Ashvatthama.

[6] Kritavarma.

[7] Kripacharya.

[8] The supreme soul, the brahman or the paramatman.

[9] These numbers are not part of the text. They have been added so that the reader can get a better sense of the one hundred books.

[10] The burning of the house of lac.

[11] The killing of Baka.

[12] Droupadi.

[13] The wedding.

[14] The arrival of Vidura.

[15] Winning of the kingdom.

[16] Arjuna's sojourn in the forest.

[17] The abduction of Subhadra.

[18] The burning of Khandava forest.

[19] Assembly hall.

[20] When the council meets.

[21] The killing of Jarasandha.

[22] Conquest.

[23] Royal sacrifice.

[24] Offerings or gifts.

[25] The slaying of Shishupala.

[26] The game of dice.

[27] The sequel to the game of dice.

[28] Characterizing the forest.

[29] The slaying of Kirmira.

[30] Shiva.

[31] The travel to the world of Indra.

[32] The killing of Jatasura.

[33] War of the yakshas.

[34] Boa constrictor.

[35] Named after a sage known as Markandeya.

[36] Travel with the cattle.

[37] Dream of the deer.

[38] The abduction of Droupadi.

[39] Jarasandha.

[40] The theft of the earrings.

[41]*Arani* is a wood or stick used for kindling a sacred fire and this parva is named after that.

[42] Virata was the king of the Matsya kingdom and the Pandavas lived there in exile.

[43] The slaying of Kichaka.

[44] The stealing of cattle.

[45] Endeavour.

[46] The arrival of Sanjaya.

[47] Sleeplessness at night.

[48] An arrival in search of peace.

[49] Krishna.

[50]*Niryanana* means departure or exit.

[51] One of the seven continents (*dvipa*) that surround Mount Meru. Sometimes, the number of continents is also given as eighteen. But seven is more standard. The word dvipa also means island. But here, it has been used in the alternative meaning, a division of the terrestrial world.

[52] The slaying of Abhimanyu.

[53] Oath.

[54] The slaying of Jayadratha.

[55] The slaying of Ghatotkacha.

[56] Named after Karna.

[57] Named after Shalya.

[58] Duel of the clubs.

[59] The word *souptika* means something connected with sleep and the name is a reference to the fact that the protagonists were asleep and the incidents took place at

night.

[60] Named after the aishika weapon.

[61] Offering of water.

[62] Women.

[63]*Shraddha* means funeral rites.

[64] Peace.

[65] Concerning clubs.

[66] The great departure.

[67] Ascent to heaven.

[68] The lineage of Hari.

[69] Concerning the future. The Harivamsha is usually accepted as an appendix to the Mahabharata, but not what is referred to as Bhavishya parva. Bhavishya parva is what is known as Bhavishya Purana, one of the eighteen major Puranas. Barring this reference, Bhavishya parva is not part of the Mahabharata. Consequently, it doesn't find a mention in Section 1's listing either.

[70] Indra's horse, which emerged as a result of the churning of the ocean.

[71] This is the sixth parva, listed as the descent of the first generation. After this, one loses the matching between the eighteen-parva classification and the 100-parva classification, since the text now sticks to the eighteen-parva classification.

[72] One may loosely use the word demon for both daitya and danava, but daityas are descendants of Diti and danavas are descendants of Danu.

[73] Nagas are not snakes. Snakes are *sarpa*s. Nagas can perhaps be translated as serpents. Unlike snakes, nagas can assume other forms (such as human) and live in separate geographical regions, not earth. They are also sometimes semi-divine. Sarpas live on earth.

[74] Vichitravirya.

[75] Arjuna.

[76] A *chataka* or a peacock.

[77] The critical version has 225 chapters.

[78] Assembly hall.

[79] Jarasandha was the king of Magadha and he had imprisoned the kings in his capital, Girivraja.

[80] Yudhishthira.

[81] Concerning the forest.

[82] The flower of the coral tree, one of the five trees in heaven.

[83] Kartyavirya was the king of the Haihayas. This Rama is Parashurama, son of Jamadagni. Kartyavirya was killed by Parashurama because he abducted Jamadagni's sacred cow.

[84] Nectar, beverage of the gods.

[85] Arjuna.

[86] Arjuna.

[87] Arjuna.

[88] Sacker of cities, Indra's name.

[89] The critical edition has 298 chapters.

[90] A large tree that was believed to contain fire inside it.

[91] Bhima.

[92] Arjuna.

[93] Duryodhana.

[94] The critical edition has 197 chapters.

[95] In that parva.

[96] Arjuna.

[97] Arjuna's name is Kiriti, meaning the diademed one.

[98] Bhurishrava.

[99] Vyasa.

[100] The critical edition has 173 chapters.

[101] Shalya. Shalya was Karna's charioteer.

[102] The critical edition has sixty-four chapters.

[103] Pritha is Kunti's name and the sons of Pritha are the Pandavas.

[104] Ashvatthama.

[105] Yadava warrior.

[106] Dronacharya was sage Bharadvaja's son and was the preceptor, while Ashvatthama was Dronacharya's son. Because he was Bharadvaja's son, Dronacharya was known as Bhaaradvaja. The absence of diacritical marks makes distinction between Bharadvaja (the father) and Bhaaradvaja (the son) difficult, especially when we write Bhaaradvaja as Bharadvaja to make the translation smooth. However, the context should make it clear whether Bharadvaja or Bhaaradvaja is meant.

[107] Arjuna. Phalguni and Phalguna are used synonymously.

[108] Kunti.

[109] Bhishma was on a bed of arrows when he told this.

[110] The critical edition has 353 chapters.

[111] The critical edition has 154 chapters.

[112] By the Pandavas.

[113] Arjuna's.

[114] Babhruvahana.

[115] The critical edition has ninety-six chapters.

[116] Kunti.

[117] Vedavyasa.

[118] The critical edition has forty-seven chapters.

[119] Concerning clubs.

[120] The men of the Vrishni lineage.

[121] A kind of reed.

[122] Balarama.

[123] Krishna.

[124] Krishna's father. Vasudeva is Krishna's father and therefore, Krishna is known as Vaasudeva. The absence of diacritical marks makes distinction between Vasudeva and Vaasudeva difficult, especially because Vaasudeva is written as Vasudeva to make the translation smooth. However, the context should make it clear whether Vasudeva (the father) or Vaasudeva (the son) is meant.

[125] Krishna.

[126] Balarama.

[127] The genealogy of Hari.

[128] The book of the future.

[129] The Vedangas.

[130] Earth, water, energy, wind and sky.

[131] Those born alive from wombs, those born from eggs, those that are plants and those that are born from sweat (insects).

[132] Purana means ancient account or tale and there are eighteen great Puranas, each describing creation, destruction, different eras, genealogies and the histories of the solar and lunar dynasties.

[133] Vedavyasa or Vyasadeva.

[134] Place of pilgrimage near Ajmer.

[1] The dog is referred to as *sarameya*, meaning progeny of Sarama. Sarama was the dog of the gods and the ancestor of all dogs.

[2] An epithet signifying reverence.

[3] Shrutashrava.

[4] The sun-plant, more like a bush.

[5] The twin physicians of the gods. They were sons of the sun.

[6] Upamanyu.

[7] Three hundred and sixty days.

[8] The year.

[9] The nave of the wheel is the year and the sum of 720 is obtained by adding 360 days and 360 nights.

[10] The meaning is not clear and the number twenty probably represents the gap between solar days and lunar days.

[11] Twelve months or twelve signs of the zodiac.

[12] The six seasons.

[13] The ten cardinal points, including zenith (above) and nadir (below).

[14] Upamanyu.

[15] Ayoda-Dhoumya.

[16] Upamanyu's.

[17] That is, the preceptor must receive payment (*dakshina*) after the successful completion of training and the disciple must give it.

[18] Funeral oblation.

[19] Poushya.

[20] By saying that it was unclean.

[21] The word used is *kshapanaka*, which means not just any mendicant, but a Buddhist or a Jain one.

[22] The word used now is sarpa, not naga. That is, these two words are being used synonymously here.

[23] Airavata is Indra's elephant. But this Airavata is a king of the nagas.

[24] This is a different Dhritarashtra; another name for Airavata.

[25] Takshaka's son. Arjuna killed Ashvasena's mother. In his search for revenge, Ashvasena entered Karna's weapon in an attempt to kill Arjuna, an attempt that failed.

[26] Not to be confused with Janamejaya's brother, who had the same name.

[27] All these are salutations to Indra.

[28] Demon killed by Indra.

[29] Demon killed by Indra.

[30] This is Indra's horse Ucchaihshrava, which emerged from the churning of the ocean.

[31] One of Indra's names.

[32] Utanka.

[33] The god of rain, also Indra.

[34] The god of fire.

[35] Takshaka killed Janamejaya's father Parikshit. That was the reason Janamejaya undertook a sacrifice to destroy all serpents.

[36] The sage Kashyapa, who tried to restrain Takshaka from killing Parikshit.

[1] The numbering of chapters is sequential throughout the translation, instead of separate numbering of chapters within sections. This is also the pattern followed in the critical edition.

[2] Shounaka was descended from Bhrigu.

[3] Wind-gods.

[4] Agni.

[5] The word means to be deprived of, or perishing.

[6] That is, would devour anything.

[7] Maintenance of the special fire (Agni) and the offering of oblations to it.

[8] Sacrifices or oblations in general.

[9] Sacrifices on the day of the new moon.

[10] Sacrifices on the day of the full moon.

[11] There were originally thirty-three gods—eleven in heaven, eleven in the sky and eleven on earth. Another way of getting the number is by adding twelve adityas, eleven rudras and ten vishvadevas.

[12] Exclamations made at the time of offering oblations.

[13] Oblations offered to ancestors.

[14] Exclamations made at the time of offering oblations.

[15] Brahma's epithet.

[16] An *apsara*. Apsaras are celestial maidens associated with Indra's court. They are sometimes regarded as wives of gandharvas.

[17] Literally, the most beautiful.

[18] Sthulakesha.

[19] Star.

[20] Better known as Uttaraphalguni.

[21] Yama, who rules over death.

[22] A snake that is not poisonous.

[23] That is, non-poisonous.

[1] The word *prajapati* means lord of the world and has different nuances. It is a name for Brahma. However, those who were appointed by Brahma to rule over the worlds are also known as Prajapati. Accordingly, Daksha is also known as Prajapati and the reference here is to Daksha.

[2] The word used is *yayavara*s, an expression also used by Jaratkaru's ancestors.

[3] Vasuki is a great naga or serpent and is the king of the nagas. Vasuki was the rope when the ocean was churned by the gods and the demons.

[4] Kadru and Vinata were daughters of Daksha and were married to the sage Kashyapa. Kadru was the mother of the snakes and as the story unfolds, we will learn that Kadru cursed her offspring because they did not side with her in her rivalry with Vinata.

[5] That is, Agni.

[6] Vasuki.

[7] Jaratkaru.

[8] Janamejaya.

[9] Daksha.

[10] The son. Aruna is the red sky of dawn and is also the sun's charioteer.

[11] Vishnu.

[12] The ocean.

[13] Mythical beings with human bodies and heads of horses.

[14] A yojana is a measure of distance and is equal to four *krosha*s. A yojana is between 13 and 15 kilometres.

[15] Ananta literally means without end and is a name for the naga Shesha, on whom Vishnu rests, and who is Vasuki's elder brother. Instructed by Vishnu or Narayana, Ananta uprooted Mandara.

[16] Mandara.

[17] In a loose sense, asuras and danavas are both demons. But asura is more of a general term and means the antithesis of *sura*s or gods. Danavas are more specific demons, in the sense that they are the offspring of Danu. Daityas are also specific demons, in the sense that they are the offspring of Diti.

[18] Ucchaihshrava.

[19] The sun.

[20] The physician of the gods.

[21] Mercury.

[22] Narayana.

[23] Rahu.

[24] A discus.

[25] The eclipses.

[26] Vishnu.

[27] The heads were adorned with gold ornaments.

[28] Weapons had to be summoned with the power of the mind.

[29] Vishnu's discus.

[30] Vishnu.

[31] Vishnu.

[32] Indra. Indra had killed a demon named Bala.

[33] Someone wearing a crown or diadem. Kiriti is another name for Arjuna. In this context, it probably means the god Nara.

[34] Ucchaihshrava.

[35] This should not cause confusion. The word Kourava is often used as opposite to Pandava. The Pandavas had Pandu as their father. However, Kuru was a common ancestor to both brothers. Hence any Pandava, and anyone descended from the Pandavas, can also be called Kourava.

[36] Brahma.

[37] Brahma.

[38] The word used is *timingila*. A whale is a *timi*, a *timingila* is that which swallows whales.

[39] The word used is *makara*. Since a makara is a mythical being, it is impossible to translate it satisfactorily. But shark or crocodile is close enough.

[40] Krishna's conch.

[41] Vishnu. This is a reference to Vishnu's boar (*varaha*) incarnation.

[42] Vishnu.

[43] As will be evident, this really means the gods.

[44] Agni.

[45] Another name for Garuda, meaning the one with beautiful feathers.

[46] Indra.

[47] Indra's wife.

[48] The word means destroyer of cities.

[49] The wind-god.

[50] Drink of the gods.

[51] *Muhurta.*

[52] Lunar days.

[53] A kshana is a small interval of time, the time it takes for a twinkling of the eye and is equal to four-fifths of a second. A *lava* is even smaller, because it is one-sixth of a kshana.

[54] The bright half of the lunar month.

[55] The dark half of the lunar month. The term used in the text is *bahula.*

[56] The daily increase or decrease in the size of the moon. A kala is the span of a zodiac sign divided by 1800. So it is roughly around 1 minute, as in minutes and degrees. Measured in time, a kala is variously defined as 1 minute, 48 seconds or 8 seconds.

[57] One-thirtieth of a kala.

[58] Very small interval of time, equal to half of a lava.

[59] Timi.

[60] Timingila.

[61] Makara. However, a makara is actually a mythical being.

[62] Indra.

[63] Indra.

[64] The Malaya mountains are in south India, adjoining Malabar. The Malaya mountains had several sandalwood trees. Thus, an alternative translation is that the island had many sandalwood trees, since *malaya* also means a sandalwood tree.

[65] Synonym for nagas.

[66] Garuda.

[67] *Amrita* is nectar or ambrosia and was produced when the ocean was churned.

[68] Hunters, fishermen. Usually, they are described as dwelling in the mountains.

[69] Kashyapa.

[70] Supratika is a common name for an elephant and this elephant should not be confused with Bhagadatta's elephant Supratika.

[71] A yojana is between 13 and 15 kilometres.

[72] Sacred place of pilgrimage.

[73] Alternatively, fig tree.

74 Garuda.

75 Rishis who number 60,000 and were generated from the creator's body. They are the size of a thumb and precede the sun's chariot.

76*Maya.*

77 Garuda.

78 Garuda's epithet.

79 Garuda.

80 The performer of a hundred sacrifices, Indra.

81 Great sage and preceptor of the gods.

82 Indra.

83 The son, Garuda.

84 Indra.

85 A tree with large, fragrant and orange-coloured flowers, the *Butea frondosa.*

86 On the road.

87 Indra.

88 A sacrifice.

89 Indra.

90 Daksha's daughter.

91 Marichi was Kashyapa's father.

92 Kashyapa.

93 Indra.

94 Aruna is the dawn and also the sun's charioteer.

95 Vishvakarma is the architect of the gods and Bhouvana (or Bhoumana) is one of his names.

96 Indra has a thousand eyes.

97 The wind-god.

98 The Ashvins.

99 Shiva.

100 That is, enter the place where the amrita was.

101 Suparna, another name for Garuda.

102 That is, Vishnu.

103*Vahana* or mount.

[104] The one with beautiful feathers.

[105] Dhritarashtra is also the name of a naga and this should not be confused with the Dhritarashtra who was Duryodhana's father.

[106]*Prayuta.*

[107]*Arbuda* is 100 million.

[108] This can also be translated as the forest of Pushkara.

[109] Brahma.

[110] Indra.

[111] Another name for Shesha.

[112] A reference to Brahma.

[113] The fee.

[114] These words are being addressed to Vasuki.

[115] The ocean.

[116] Vasuki.

[117] Souti's name.

[118] The great-grandfather was Pandu.

[119] From their mothers.

[120] The hermit's.

[121] The hermit.

[122] Hastinapura.

[123] Vaivasvata is one of Yama's names.

[124] This refers to Shamika's message, not the curse. The curse was levied by Shamika's son, Shringi.

[125] Shamika.

[126] Shamika.

[127] The name used in the text is Nagasahnya.

[128] The ministers and advisers.

[129] Yudhishthira, who in a sense was also the great-grandfather, though not as directly as Arjuna.

[130] Janamejaya.

[131] An ancient king of the lunar dynasty and therefore an ancestor of the Kouravas and the Pandavas. Pururava married the apsara Urvashi.

[132] That is, the merit obtained through these austerities.

[133] A *brahmachari*, usually translated as celibate. However, a brahmachari is strictly someone who treads the path of the brahman.

[134] Time.

[135]*Shvetakakiya*. This is an unhappy translation, though white crow is right. However, the sense is that the dedication has the watchfulness of a dog, the timidity of a deer and the instinct of a crow.

[136] Vasuki's sister.

[137] Agnihotra is a sacrificial fire. The text means that the time for making offerings to the sacrificial fire has arrived.

[138]*Asti* can be translated as 'it is there'. Jaratkaru meant that an embryo was there in the womb.

[139] Shiva, the one with a trident in his hand.

[140] Dhanur Veda. This is about the science of fighting and weaponry.

[141] Krishna.

[142] Soubhadra means Subhadra's son, that is, Abhimanyu. Parikshit was Abhimanyu's son. *Parikshina* means to become weak, thin, lean, emaciated. Since this is what had happened to the Kuru lineage, he came to be known as Parikshit.

[143]*Kama* (desire), *krodha* (anger), *lobha* (greed), *mada* (ego), *moha* (delusion) and *matsarya* (envy).

[144] The Pandavas.

[145] Takshaka had assumed the disguise of a Brahmana.

[146] This is now a reference to Kashyapa.

[147] Takshaka.

[148] Superintending or assisting priests; probably means assisting here.

[149] Officiating priests. Usually, there were four types of ritvijas—*hotar* (one who recited prayers, identified with Rig Veda), *udgatar* (one who chanted or sang prayers, identified with Sama Veda), *adhvaryu* (one who officiated, identified with Yajur Veda) and brahman (chief priest, identified with Atharva Veda).

[150] Indra.

[151] Brahma.

[152] Indra.

[153] Send the sacrifice up to the gods.

[154] That is, dying.

[155] Brahma.

[156] The brother is Vasuki.

[157] The snake-sacrifice.

[158] That is, bless him.

[159] The text should literally be translated as the staff of a Brahmana.

[160] Indra.

[161] Rama.

[162] Vyasa.

[163] Indra.

[164] The fire. Vibhavasu is also a name for the sun.

[165] The fire. Chitrabhanu is also a name for the sun.

[166] Indra.

[167] Parashurama.

[168] Semi-divine species.

[169] Takshaka.

[170] Astika.

[171] Takshaka.

[172] Lohitaksha.

[173] Names of great sages.

[174] The snake-sacrifice.

[1] Satyavati, who was dark in colour.

[2] Itihasa.

[3] Shantanu was Bhishma's father and also the father of Chitrangada and Vichitravirya. The Kouravas and the Pandavas were descended from Vichitravirya.

[4] Sadasyas.

[5] Indra.

[6] Indra.

[7] The preceptor of the gods.

[8] Divine sages.

[9] Krishna Dvaipayana.

[10] The word in the original is *pitamaha*, which means paternal grandfather, as well as being a name for Brahma. But it is also generically used for all ancestors.

[11] Exile of the Pandavas.

[12] The Pandavas.

[13] Shakuni.

[14] Bhima.

[15] Indra.

[16] Duryodhana.

[17] Karna.

[18] The Pandavas.

[19] Bhishma.

[20] Kunti.

[21] Literally, winner of riches and one of Arjuna's names.

[22] Krishna.

[23] Indra's wife.

[24] Lakshmi.

[25] The forest Khandava. The story about why Agni was allowed to burn Khandava forest will be told later. The fire-god had been suffering from indigestion and this was a cure.

[26] Arjuna's name.

[27] Maya.

[28] Shakuni.

[29] The Pandavas.

[30] *Ayuta*, meaning many in general, and ten thousand in particular.

[31] Bhima and Arjuna.

[32] Nakula and Sahadeva.

[33] Krishna Dvaipayana's.

[34] This can also specifically be translated as Himalaya.

[35] Days of the full moon and days of the new moon.

[36] That is, is freed from the desire of attaining heaven.

[37] In the morning.

[38] Indra.

[39] Beyond death.

[40] *Vimana*.

[41] Literally, that which produces victory.

[42] Uparichara.

[43] An epithet of Indra's.

[44] Vasu.

[45] *Maharatha* can loosely be translated as great warrior. However, more specifically, a maharatha was a warrior who could take on 10,000 warriors single-handed.

[46] Other sons.

[47] Literally, someone who travels through the upper regions.

[48] The mountain lusted for the river.

[49] Uparichara.

[50] Lakshmi.

[51] After swallowing the semen.

[52] The fishermen.

[53] Brahma.

[54] Semi-divine, pure and holy species.

[55] Celestial singers.

[56] Parashara.

[57] *Gandha* means smell.

[58] Dharma has four legs in Satya Yuga, three in Treta Yuga, two in Dvapara Yuga and one in Kali Yuga. The word leg (*pada*) is used metaphorically and the word also means one quarter. Thus, completion has four quarters, which is what one has in Satya Yuga. Therefore, it becomes 75% in Treta Yuga, 50% in Dvapara Yuga and 25% in Kali

Yuga.

[59] The word *vyasa* means to distribute or divide.

[60] Yama, the god of death and justice.

[61]*Shakuntika* in the original text. Shakuntika also means bird, but given the context, locust or cricket seems more appropriate.

[62] The sin of killing Animandavya.

[63] Sanjaya was a suta, that is, a charioteer-cum-raconteur. He was an aide to Dhritarashtra, who was blind, and Sanjaya has become famous because he was granted divine sight so that he could describe the incidents occurring in the Kurukshetra war to Dhritarashtra from a distance. Sanjaya's father was Gavalgana.

[64]*Kavacha* in the original text. A charm that works like armour is another possible translation.

[65]*Kundala*.

[66] Son of Sharadvata, also known as Kripacharya.

[67] Kripi.

[68] Droupadi.

[69] Subala was the king of Gandhara.

[70] Gandhari, Subala's daughter and Shakuni's sister.

[71] Shakuni and Duryodhana.

[72] The god of wind.

[73] Yuyutsu had a Vaishya mother.

[74] Droupadi.

[75] This Shrutasena should not be confused with Janamejaya's brother.

[76] The king of Panchala and the father of Dhrishtadyumna and Droupadi.

[77] Parashurama.

[78] Indra.

[79] This is a reference to Shesha naga.

[80] The earth.

[81] Conflicts with the demons.

[82] Indra.

[83] Club.

[84] Vishnu.

[1] Indra.

[2] Brahma.

[3] One should not expect consistency in accounts of creation. In some accounts, Marichi was born from Brahma and Marichi's son was Kashyapa, from whom all humans are descended through Manu. In other accounts, Brahma had seven sons born from his mental powers, with Vashishtha added to the list of six that is given in the text. These seven (or six) are prajapatis or rulers of the world. In other accounts, ten prajapatis were born from Brahma's right thumb and one of these was Daksha. Daksha had several daughters, thirteen were married to Kashyapa and twenty-seven were married to the moon or Chandra. Section 1 states that Daksha had seven sons and that Daksha was born from an ancient sage named Prachetas. But this is a rare reference. Daksha's birth from Brahma is more common.

[4] The world was being populated by offspring of the gods, and the demons are also descended from Daksha's daughters. In fact, every living species is descended from Daksha's daughters.

[5] The sun.

[6] The moon.

[7] One of Shukra's names.

[8] Tarkshya is also a name for both Garuda and Garuda's elder brother Aruna. The text suggests that Garuda and Aruna had another brother named Tarkshya.

[9] Kashyapa.

[10] Obviously, they were Prava's progeny.

[11] There is an inconsistency with what the text has just said about Prava's progeny, the gandharvas and the apsaras.

[12] One of Shiva's names.

[13] Mythical beings with human bodies and heads of horses.

[14] This is a little confusing, because there doesn't seem to be any difference between kinnaras and kimpurushas.

[15] These were the valakhilya sages, 60,000 in number. Generated from the creator's body, they are the size of a thumb and precede the sun's chariot.

[16] Daksha's.

[17] Daksha. Prajapati is also one of Brahma's names.

[18] The daughters effectively become sons in one of two ways. Either, the daughter, since she is regarded as a son, returns to her father's house after marriage, or the daughter's son is adopted as a son by his maternal grandfather.

[19] The moon, or Chandra.

[20] Brahma.

[21] The moon, or Chandra.

[22] Constellations or stars.

[23] Brahma.

[24] Ruler of the worlds.

[25] The word son doesn't always mean son in a literal sense. It can also mean progeny.

[26] The wind, or Anila.

[27] Anala, or Hutashana.

[28] That is, Anala.

[29] There are twenty-seven lunar mansions (*nakshatras*) and krittika is the third, identified with the Pleiades. However, there are actually six stars in the Pleiades. Hence the use of the plural krittikas, and the krittikas reared Kumara, which is why he is known as Kartikeya.

[30] Of Agni.

[31] Famous sage, preceptor of the gods.

[32] Vivasvat's son. Identified with Vishvakarma, architect of the gods.

[33] Daughter of the sun.

[34] Indra.

[35] *Paksha.*

[36] *Kula.*

[37] *Gana.*

[38] A class of demi-gods; a semi-divine species, Kubera's attendants.

[39] Brahma.

[40] Brahma.

[41] That is, set her free from her pregnancy.

[42] Shukra's.

[43] Ourva is another name for Chyavana. He was thus named because he was born through splitting open the thigh (*uru*).

[44] Parashurama.

[45] Not to be confused with Richika's son Jamadagni. Richika's son is the more famous Jamadagni.

[46] Jamadagni.

[47] The goddess of liquor.

[48] Her sons.

[49] Fear.

[50] Great fear.

[51] Death.

[52] Monkeys with tails like those of cows, with dark bodies and red cheeks.

[53] The cardinal points are guarded by elephants.

[54] Snakes or serpents.

[55] There were probably two Surasas, one who was Kadru's daughter and another who was Krodha's daughter.

[56] A *shyena* is a hawk or falcon, Shyeni is the feminine. So Shyeni could have been married to Vinata's son Aruna, though the text doesn't make it clear if the two Arunas were the same.

[57] The moon.

[58] Mayura's.

[59] Rahu.

[60] Vritra's.

[61] Indra.

[62] This was the seventh.

[63] Literally, those who are slaves to anger.

[64] This is known as Dhanur Veda.

[65] Destruction.

[66] Desire.

[67] Anger.

[68] Indra.

[69] The eight vasus, sons of Manu, were reborn on earth as Shantanu's sons.

[70] Maharatha.

[71] The maruts.

[72] The rakshasas.

[73] A class of gods often described as ten in number. Their mother was Vishva.

[74] Goddess Lakshmi.

[75] *Vaiduryamani.*

[76] Gandhari.

[77] Also spelt Dushyanta.

[78] Barbarians, non-Aryans, those who did not speak Sanskrit.

[79] The god of rain. That is, Indra.

[80] Large mountain.

[81] Indra.

[82] That is, Garuda. The speed was like that of Garuda.

[83] Indra's garden.

[84] The word used in the text is *shatapada*, one with six legs. This is a word for a bee.

[85] That is, a tree.

[86] Duhshanta.

[87] Sacrificial fires.

[88] A *yati* is specifically an ascetic.

[89] The word used in the text is *kaccha*. This is usually the word used for a marsh. But a marsh does not seem right, given the context.

[90] The ruddy goose.

[91] The king of the gandharvas.

[92] This is probably a reference to the Yajur Veda. The critical edition jumps from the Rig Veda to the Atharva Veda, at least by name. The Yajur Veda is not explicitly mentioned. Some regional variations mention the Yajur Veda explicitly and there are shlokas, missing in the critical edition, that mention the Sama Veda.

[93] Kanva.

[94] Kanva.

[95] Goddess Lakshmi.

[96] Kanva.

[97] Indra.

[98] Indra.

[99] Vishvamitra's name is Koushika.

[100] Vishvamitra.

[101] A nakshatra, that is, a star or constellation.

[102] The wind-god. Vayu is another one of his names.

[103] The god of love. Kama is another one of his names.

[104] She is actually repeating Kanva's words.

[105] Indra.

[106] The word used is *shakuna*. In a general sense, this means bird. But in a specific sense, it means vultures or kites.

[107] This is Kanva speaking.

[108] One of the eight forms of marriage. In this form, there are no ceremonies and no relatives are present. The bride and the groom willingly marry each other in what is a marriage of love.

[109] Brahma.

[110] It is not clear what this number five refers to, probably the last five of the eight mentioned forms.

[111] With infantry, cavalry, elephants and chariots.

[112] Kanva.

[113] A wheel, the sign of a king.

[114]*Sarva* is everything and *damana* is to subjugate.

[115] The word used is *yuvaraja*, which can be translated as prince or young king. However, this appellation also signifies the person becoming an heir apparent.

[116] That is, paternal relatives.

[117] Literally, the city of the elephant and another name for Hastinapura, Duhshanta's capital.

[118] From the word for 'being born'.

[119] Brahma.

[120] Dharma, artha and kama.

[121] There are three kinds of sacrificial fires—*ahavaniya, garhapatya* and *dakshina*. The garhapatya fire burns in the household, the ahavaniya fire is the one into which sacrificial offerings are placed and the dakshina fire is the one that faces the south.

[122] There were originally thirty or thirty-three gods —eleven in heaven, eleven in the sky and eleven on earth. Another way of getting the number is by adding twelve adityas, eleven rudras and ten vishvadevas.

[123] Alternatively, wise instead of aged.

[124] That is, the gift of a pond.

[125] Bharata means to maintain.

[126] A universal monarch or sovereign of the world. Sarvabhouma has the same meaning.

[127] It is not clear what this means. A padma is a lotus. But this doesn't quite fit the requirement. Were one thousand lotuses given? A padma is also one trillion. In that case, one trillion of what is left unsaid. Perhaps a padma simply connotes a large number and a large number of cows were given.

[128] In this context, Brahma.

[129] One of six schools of philosophy, attributed to the sage Kapila.

[130] The word for men is *manava*.

[131] Manu is not the name of a single person. There were fourteen Manus, each presiding over the interval between a round of destruction and recreation. The first Manu (Svayambhuva) produced the first round of human beings. However, the present round of human beings is descended from the seventh Manu (Vaivasvata).

[132]*Naga*s or serpents.

[133] Robbers or dacoits. The word also means evil beings or demons that were enemies of gods and men. It can also mean outcasts or outcastes.

[134] Yayati.

[135] Devayani.

[136] Brihaspati, the preceptor of the gods.

[137] The demons. That is, the demons also had a priest for the same purpose.

[138] Ushanas is another name for Shukra or Shukracharya, the preceptor of the demons. The text has the word *kavya*, which has been translated as wise. However, Kavya is also another name for Shukra and Kavya is the son of Kavi.

[139] The knowledge of bringing the dead back to life.

[140] The king of the demons.

[141] Sacrificial fire kindled in the evening. Presumably, this was Kacha's task.

[142] Shukra.

[143] The brighter half of the lunar month.

[144] Shukra.

[145] Angirasa was Shukra's preceptor.

[146] Indra. Literally, the performer of a hundred sacrifices.

[147] Indra. Literally, the destroyer of cities.

[148] Indra.

[149] Meaning that the forest or the wood was beautiful. Chitraratha was the king of the gandharvas.

[150] The text actually has Devayani addressing Sharmishtha as her disciple. This is

because Devayani's father (Shukra) was the preceptor to Sharmishtha's father (Vrishaparva).

151 One of Devayani's companions or maids.

152 Before the quarrel, Devayani and Sharmishtha were friends.

153 There is a break in continuity in the critical edition. Other editions have a shloka where Shukra goes and tells Devayani what has occurred.

154 That of giving birth to a child.

155 Devayani.

156 Indra.

157 This isn't clear at all. There was a kingdom of Bhoja in the Vidarbha or Malwa region. But why should that be a curse? Or is this appellation a reference to people who were addicted to food (*bhojana*)?

158 Usually there is reference to three sacrificial fires—ahavaniya, garhapatya and dakshina. The other two sacred fires are *samya* and *avasadhya*.

159 Indra.

160 Clearly, not material prosperity, but riches obtained through righteousness.

161 The text should literally be translated as those born from sweat.

162 Another name for Indra.

163 Meaning Vishnu.

164 From an earlier reference, one knows that Ashtaka was a king. Yayati was his maternal grandfather.

165 The first of the four yugas, also known as Satya Yuga.

166 The word used is *shitikantha*, which means white in the neck. This means a peacock, though some kind of vulture with a white neck is also possible.

167 That is, through the merits of one's earlier deeds.

168 As enumerated in what immediately follows, the five sense organs and mind.

169 That is, ritualistic deeds.

170 None of this is to be interpreted in a literal sense. For instance, the teeth are clean because he lives on pure food, the nails are clipped because he does not hurt anyone, he is always bathed and without dirt because his actions are pure and his deeds are white because they are good.

171 Pain and pleasure, happiness and unhappiness, and so on.

172 Cattle and other animals eat to survive, without making eating the end object.

173 The ascetic and the householder who has learning.

[174] As mentioned earlier, Pratardana was also a king.

[175] Accept gifts.

[176] An *arbuda* is one hundred million.

[177] The apsara's name.

[178] Earth, water, energy, air and the sky.

[179] The suggestion is that the son was actually Bharadvaja's.

[180] Fourfold armies include elephants, horses, chariots and infantry.

[181] Indus.

[182] Samvarana.

[183] The word used is *vishana*, which means both horn (as in trumpet) and tusk.

[184] *Jangala* is an arid plain.

[185] Different from Janamejaya, Parikshit's son.

[186] Not to be confused with Parikshit, Arjuna's grandson.

[187] Not to be confused with the horse.

[188] Designed to ensure conquest (*jita*) of the world (*vishva*).

[189] The word *prach* means eastern or easterly.

[190] An *ayuta* is 10,000.

[191] The word used is *bhastra*, which is a leather bag or pouch, usually used for storing water.

[192] By giving birth to offspring.

[193] The word *shanta* means to appease, calm, satisy, pacify, cure or alleviate.

[194] That is, die.

[195] Bhima.

[196] Ceremony where the bride chooses her own groom.

[197] *Shulka* is price, but this not a marriage where a bride price is paid. *Virya* means valour, so this is a marriage where the bride is married to the person who exhibits the most valour.

[198] Kunti.

[199] The word *parikshina* means diminished, decayed, thin. In this context, even extinct can be used.

[200] There doesn't seem to be much point in telling Janamejaya this. Perhaps the intention is to make the account complete.

[201] A sacrifice where offerings of food and water were made.

[202] Celestial, terrestrial and subterranean. The river Ganga flows in all three regions.

[203] As mentioned earlier, the word *shanta* means to appease, calm, satisy, pacify, cure or alleviate. With the same etymological root, earlier, a slightly different twist has been given to the name Shantanu, concerning Shantanu's traits and not those of his father.

[204] Lakshmi.

[205] Vasishtha.

[206] Meaning, one given by Ganga.

[207] Ganga. Jahnavi is Ganga's name because Ganga is Jahnu's daughter.

[208] Indra.

[209] Dyou was her husband.

[210] Dyou.

[211] The moon-god.

[212] Indra. Literally, one who sacks cities.

[213] Shukra.

[214] Brihaspati.

[215] Parashurama.

[216] Indra.

[217] The maintenance of the sacred fire.

[218] The word three here accordingly refers to the first three Vedas.

[219] The three Vedas.

[220] Indra, the performer of a hundred sacrifices.

[221] The marriage.

[222] Devavrata.

[223] The terrible or fearsome one, because of the vow he took. The word *bhishma* means terrible or fearssome.

[224] The gandharva was also named Chitrangada.

[225] Maya.

[226] That is, through a system of bride price being paid.

[227] The eight forms of marriage actually are brahma, daiva, arsha, prajapatya, asura, gandharva, rakshasa and paishacha.

[228] Garuda.

[229] Vichitravirya.

[230] Ganga.

[231] Soubha is the name of the kingdom. The king's name is Shalva.

[232] Brihaspati.

[233] Indra.

[234] Parashurama.

[235] The king of the Haihayas was Kartavirya Arjuna.

[236] That is, the person who married the mother, not the one who begot the son.

[237] The critical edition has eliminated shlokas that tell us Dirghatama was born blind. Hence, the long period of darkness is left unexplained.

[238] Dirghatama. One now knows that Dirghatama was blind.

[239] This bull among men is Janamejaya. Although Bhishma is now telling the story to Satyavati, it is being retold by Vaishampayana. However, this reference to Janamejaya shouldn't have been here, since it is Bhishma who is speaking.

[240] Vichitravirya's wives.

[241] The word *vyasa* means to divide or distribute.

[242] Satyavati's name. She was so called because she was dark.

[243] Both Ambika and Ambalika, who were princesses from the kingdom of Kashi. Kousalya means a princess of Kosala.

[244] Satyavati.

[245] The word *pandu* means pale or white.

[246] Satyavati.

[247] The word *ani* means point, usually of a needle.

[248] Animandavya was a child when he pierced the insect.

[249] Krita Yuga or Satya Yuga, the first of the four yugas and a time when dharma was at its best. The incidents of the Mahabharata occurred during Dvapara Yuga, the third of the yugas.

[250] Hastinapura.

[251] The word used is *kripana*. It can also be translated as miserly.

[252] Hastinapura.

[253] Because he was born of a Shudra woman.

[254] Vedavyasa.

[255] Bhishma was speaking to Vidura in particular.

[256] Bhishma.

[257] This is a reference to an incident when the gods refused to give Shiva (Hara) a share in the sacrificial offerings. Shiva ripped out the god Bhaga's eyes.

[258] The adopted father, Kuntibhoja.

[259] She would face a difficulty in having sons.

[260] The sun-god.

[261] The sun-god.

[262] Once she was reared by Kuntibhoja, Pritha obtained the name Kunti.

[263] His name was Adhiratha.

[264]*Vasu* means riches and the riches he was born with were the natural armour and earrings.

[265] Indra. Indra was attempting to protect and help Arjuna.

[266] A *shakti* is a spear or lance. But this one was divine.

[267] Vikartana is the sun, so Vaikartana means the sun's son. *Karna* means the ear.

[268] Indra is Maghavan. His wife is Shachi. Since Shachi was Puloma's daughter, she is Poulomi.

[269] Pandu.

[270] Hastinapura. Nagapura is another name for Hastinapura, the city of the elephant. The word *naga* means elephant.

[271] Another name for Hastinapura.

[272] There are two Kousalyas, Ambika and Ambalika. This one is Ambalika.

[273] In this case, father means Bhishma.

[274] Ambika and Ambalika.

[275] Ambalika.

[276] Jayanta is the son of Indra and Shachi.

[277] Purandara is Indra and Indra's elephant is Airavata.

[278] Bhishma.

[279] The word used is *parashava*. This means offspring born of a Brahmana father and a Shudra mother. While the word also means bastard, it couldn't have been used in that sense. Because in that sense of bastard or mixed breed, Dhritarashtra and Pandu were no different.

[280] There is a problem with the numbers, since there were only 100 pots.

[281] This is a reference to Section 6, Adi-vamshavatarana Parva.

[282] Meaning that the enemy was unprepared.

[283] Dharma, artha and kama.

[284] That is, a different tree for every night.

[285] Not beg from more than seven families.

[286] A name for Vidura, a man born from a Kshatriya woman and a Shudra man.

[287] The four ashramas—brahmacharya, garhasthya, vanaprastha and sannyasa.

[288] There is a problem of translation here. What has been translated as superior residents should literally be translated as residents of families. And inferior residents should literally be translated as residents of villages. This doesn't quite seem right. Hence village is probably being used in an inferior and normative sense.

[289] Hastinapura.

[290] Alternatively, the primary elements.

[291] Mountain with a hundred peaks.

[292] Krishna Dvaipayana.

[293] These are both heirs and relatives.

[294] These are neither heirs, nor relatives. As listed, the number adds up to seven and not six. Nor are the differences very clear. For instance, purchased/bought or gifted/presented occur in both categories. In the first list, the word for purchased is *parikrita*. In the second list, the word for purchased is *krita*. The text doesn't enable us to deduce the difference and is this also the case with gifted/presented.

[295] Meaning those of non-human birth.

[296] Kalmashapada was Sudasa's son.

[297] Lunar day.

[298] A nakshatra.

[299] The wind-god.

[300] Bhima.

[301] Indra.

[302] Indra.

[303] Agni, or fire. Specifically *havya* is sacrificial offerings and *vahana* is the one who bears. Havyavahana is therefore the sacrificial fire into which offerings are placed.

[304] Parashurama.

[305] Pritha's son, Arjuna.

[306] Bibhatsu is one of Arjuna's names and means the terrible one.

[307] Meaning that she was superior in birth to Kunti.

[308] By obtaining more sons than Kunti.

[309] Mango.

[310] That is, he did not succumb to desire with Kunti.

[311] Hastinapura.

[312] There were parts of the bodies that had not been burnt. Having said this, there is some contradiction about when the bodies were burnt.

[313] The word used is *vardhaman*, which means increasing. This has been translated as the chief gate. But it is perfectly possible for this to have been the proper name for the gate.

[314] Another name for Hastinapura.

[315] Dhritarashtra.

[316] Another name for Vayu.

[317] Indra.

[318] This is yet another name for Hastinapura. The word *varana* means elephant.

[319] Ambalika.

[320] Duryodhana.

[321] Kunti's son. In this case, Bhima.

[322] Duryodhana.

[323] Bhima.

[324] The word used is *sarathi*, which usually means charioteer, but also means companion. Charioteer doesn't make any sense here, companion makes more sense. The companions are Bhima's brothers.

[325] Vidura. It could also mean Yuyutsu.

[326] There is a break of continuity in the critical edition and Kripa appears out of the blue. In other editions, we are told that Dhritarashtra wanted to find a teacher for the princes, since they were getting out of control. Kripa, descended from Goutama, was chosen to teach the art of fighting.

[327] The word *shara* means arrow and Sharadvat is one with arrows.

[328] The science or knowledge of weapons.

[329] The word *kripa* means compassion. One of the twins was a boy and he was named Kripa. The other one was a girl and she was named Kripi.

[330] Kripa.

[331] There are four *upaveda*s or minor *veda*s, of which, *dhanurveda* is one. Each *upaveda* is attached to one of the main *veda*s. The other three *upaveda*s are *ayurveda*

(medicine), *gandharvaveda* (music) and *sthapatyaveda* (architecture).

[332] There is a break in continuity in the critical edition. Bharadvaja had gone to the Ganga for a bath before making the offerings into the fire.

[333]*Drona*. This is usually a wooden vessel.

[334] Agniveshya.

[335]*Ashva* means horse and *sthaman* means strength or stamina.

[336] Parashurama.

[337] Drona.

[338] Parashurama.

[339] The word used is *shrotriya*, which can also be translated as a learned Brahmana.

[340] Drupada, the king of Panchala.

[341] Hastinapura.

[342] The word used is *vita*. I have translated this as ball. But there is no evidence to suggest that this was spherical. In all probability, this was a short piece of wood struck with another long piece of wood, something like a bat. *Guli-danda* may be the closest approximation.

[343] The word used is *ishika* and means reed. In recounting this particular anecdote, renderings invariably interpret this as reed or grass. However, ishika also means arrow and Drona could have used arrows instead of reeds. There is nothing in the text to counter the arrow interpretation.

[344] Radha's son, Karna.

[345] Implying weapons that were held in the hand.

[346] Hunter or fisherman. Usually, described as dwelling in the mountains and forests.

[347] The text uses the word *shabdabheda*, which is the art of shooting with the aid of sound alone, without seeing the object. Earlier, there was no suggestion that Ekalavya had not seen the dog when he was shooting the arrows. From the use of this word here, it seems that he had not seen the dog and had only heard it bark.

[348] Arjuna.

[349] Arjuna.

[350] A maharatha is a warrior who can take on 10,000 warriors single-handed. An *atiratha* can take on 60,000.

[351] Kunti's son. In this case, Yudhishthira.

[352] Arjuna.

[353] Arjuna.

[1] Bhishma.

[2] Drona was the sage Bharadvaja's son.

[3] Vidura.

[4] *Vaidurya.*

[5] Drona.

[6] The princes.

[7] Some spectators.

[8] Duryodhana's name.

[9] Over a female elephant.

[10] Kunti.

[11] Duryodhana.

[12] Name for Arjuna. Phalguna and Phalguni are used synonymously.

[13] The arm guard is called a *godha*. It was made out of leather and fastened to the left arm, to guard against injury from the string of the bow, since most archers were right-handed. A godha is also an alligator or lizard. The finger protector is called *angulitrana*. It was also used to protect against injury from the bowstring. It resembled a thimble and was usually used on the thumb. But it could also be used on other fingers.

[14] Arjuna.

[15] Indra.

[16] That is, tied to his waist.

[17] Paka was a demon and Paka's punisher is Indra. Arjuna was Indra's son.

[18] The rainbow is called Indra's bow.

[19] Indra. There is a suggestion that is left implicit, but becomes a bit more explicit in the next sentence. Indra was looking down fondly not on the arena in general, but on his son, Arjuna. And the sun especially dispersed the clouds so as to favour his son, Karna.

[20] Drona.

[21] Kunti.

[22] Because the sons of kings do not fight with those who are of an inferior lineage.

[23] Karna.

[24] With the umbrella, this forms the royal insignia and these whisks were usually made out of yak tails.

[25] Duryodhana.

[26] Duryodhana's name.

[27] Karna.

[28] One of Kartikeya's epithets.

[29] One of the twenty-seven nakshatras, actually consisting of six stars, the Pleiades. The Krittikas reared Kartikeya. Hence, the name.

[30] Karna.

[31]*Dakshina*, the preceptor's fee that has to be paid at the end of the learning process.

[32] Drupada.

[33] Vidura.

[34] Kripa.

[35] In case the banishing idea was implemented.

[36] Ashvatthama.

[37] Bhishma, Drona and Kripa.

[38] Ashvatthama.

[39] The Pandavas.

[40] Shiva's.

[41] Dhritarashtra.

[42] Ashvatthama.

[43] Dhritarashtra.

[44] As a sign of respect.

[45] Keep them secret.

[46] Duryodhana.

[47] The word 'mothers' is used in a general sense, to indicate all the women who were elderly.

[48] Yudhishthira.

[49] Pandu.

[50] Dhritarashtra.

[51] Vidura.

[52] Yudhishthira.

[53] That is, in a riddle, so that no one else could understand. But Vidura and Yudhishthira were both learned, so Yudhishthira understood what Vidura said. Indeed, the text is such that it is difficult to understand what is being obliquely said, except that a sense of danger is being communicated. But since this was a riddle, that's probably understandable.

[54] The five senses.

[55] Yudhishthira.

[56] Vidura.

[57] A nakshatra.

[58] Victory.

[59] Indra.

[60] Meaning the Kshatriyas.

[61] As will become clear, this was not the house Purochana had built.

[62] Pritha's son. In this context, Bhimasena.

[63] Duryodhana.

[64] Purochana.

[65]*Khanaka*. Miner is more accurate as a translation. But in this context, digger seems more appropriate.

[66] Yudhishthira.

[67] The lunar month's darker fortnight.

[68] A non-Aryan or barbarian. However, a *mleccha* was actually someone who spoke in a language other than Sanskrit. There is a problem with the critical edition here. In other editions, Vidura spoke to Yudhishthira in mleccha language, so this reference makes sense. However, in the critical edition, Vidura speaking to Yudhishthira in the mleccha language has been excised and what has been left is Vidura speaking to Yudhishthira in a riddle. So this reference doesn't quite fit.

[69] Purochana.

[70] Kunti.

[71] Purochana.

[72] Purochana.

[73] Yudhishthira and Arjuna.

[74] Bhishma.

[75] Dhritarashtra.

[76]*Shukra* and *shuchi* mean the summer season. Specifically, shukra is the month of Jyeshtha. Shuchi is a general term for the hot season, the months of Jyeshtha and Ashada.

[77] The word used for large tree is *vanaspati*, which means lord of the forest.

[78] That is, the others.

[79] Duryodhana.

[80]*Nyagrodha*. Can also be translated as banyan tree.

[81] He was speaking to Yudhishthira.

[82] Arjuna.

[1] The Pandavas.

[2] A very tall and stately tree.

[3] Kunti.

[4] From the tree.

[5] This is the sister, not named thus far. The avoidance of diacritical marks makes it difficult to differentiate the brother from the sister. The brother is Hidimba, while the sister is Hidimbaa. In the translation, Hidimba will be used for both, since the context will make it clear which one is meant, and Hidimbaa seems forced.

[6] Kama, the god of love. He has no body because he was burnt to ashes by Shiva.

[7] The god of love.

[8] His sister.

[9] The Pandavas.

[10] The Pandavas.

[11] The god of love.

[12] Arjuna.

[13] Bhima. As a son of Pritha, Bhima is also Partha.

[14] The time of daybreak.

[15] Maya.

[16] Bhima.

[17] Bhima.

[18] Duryodhana.

[19] The Pandavas.

[20] Maya.

[21] The god of love.

[22] The implication of this statement is that Hidimba would not survive if she did not get Bhima.

[23] Sacred lake near Mount Kailasha.

[24]*Ghata.*

[25] This probably means that Hidimba made the kind of agreement that Ghatotkacha did, that she would return whenever they needed her.

[26] Indra. Indra gave Karna a weapon that was later used to kill Ghatotkacha and could therefore not be used against Arjuna, since the weapon could only be used once.

[27] The Pandavas.

[28] They hastened when their disguise was threatened and travelled slowly when there was no danger.

[29] Texts about morals and ethics.

[30] Vedavyasa.

[31] The Pandavas.

[32] The sons of Pritha, that is, the Pandavas.

[33] Vyasa.

[34] Royal sacrifice.

[35] Horse-sacrifice.

[36] The eldest, Yudhishthira.

[1] Kunti.

[2] Kunti.

[3] The distress, caused by the terror of a rakshasa.

[4] The name of a famous cow, in particular the cow which grants all that one desires (*kamadhenu*).

[5] The Brahmana's wife.

[6] The wife, the son or the daughter.

[7] There is a hell (*naraka*) named *punnama*. Those who do not have offspring are destined to go there. It is because a child (son) saves the ancestors from going to punnama that the name putra is given.

[8] To the rakshasa.

[9] The ancestors. That is, by surviving.

[10] In this context, relatives means the immediate family.

[11] This is an argument to explain why the Brahmana did not go and live somewhere else.

[12] Wishing to learn the secret of the power.

[13] Kunti.

[14] In the sense of restoring life.

[15] Bhima. Anila is the wind-god.

[16] The other Pandavas had gone out, in search of alms. From the subsequent conversation, Yudhishthira had not gone out either. It was only Arjuna, Nakula and Sahadeva who were absent.

[17] Bhima's.

[18] Bhima.

[19] Bhima.

[20] Ayuta; can also be translated as many.

[21] Indra's weapon.

[22] The rakshasa.

[23] The rakshasa's.

[24] Baka.

[25] Yudhishthira.

[1] Ceremony where the bride chooses her own groom. He told them that the *svayamvara* was being planned.

[2] Yajnasena is one of Drupada's names.

[3] Droupadi.

[4] The Pandavas.

[5] The visiting Brahmana.

[6] Dhrishtadyumna.

[7] Drona and Drupada.

[8] A brahmachari. Because he had been a brahmachari, he had immense powers.

[9]*Drona*. A *drona* was used to carry water and can also be translated as a vessel, rather than cup.

[10] The son of Prishata, hence Drupada.

[11] Parashurama.

[12] That is, going away to the forest after giving away all his wealth.

[13] Parashurama.

[14] Drona.

[15] Another name for Hastinapura.

[16] Chhatravati is another name for Ahichhatra, which was the capital of the kingdom of Panchala.

[17] Drupada.

[18] As will become evident later, Drupada's wife accompanied him on his travels.

[19] That is, his sons.

[20] The word snataka has many nuances. Here it means a Brahmana who has completed his first course of study.

[21] Drupada.

[22] Arbuda, which means 100 million.

[23] Jamadagni's son is Parashurama.

[24] This inconsistency in the number of cows offered to Yaja exists in the text.

[25] Drupada.

[26] A qualification is needed for this translation. The word used is *mithuna*, and what seems to be suggested is an act of intercourse between the queen and Yaja. One can also translate this sentence as, 'The time for the twins has arrived', meaning the births of Droupadi and Dhrishtadyumna, but this doesn't seem to be very natural as a translation.

[27] Krosha, a little over 2 miles.

[28]*Dhrishtata* means courage and confidence, and *dyumna* means splendour, glory or lustre.

[29] Drona.

[30] In an earlier life.

[31] Another name for Shankara.

[32] Vyasa.

[33] Arjuna.

[34] The sound of their footsteps.

[35] Muhurta.

[36] Of the night.

[37]*Kunapa*. This can also mean those who smell like corpses and is therefore also used as a contemptuous term for those who are alive.

[38] Shatakratu is a performer of 100 sacrifices and is one of Indra's names.

[39] There was no danger from this revelation of identity, since it wouldn't have reached the Kouravas.

[40] One with an adorned chariot; *ratha* is chariot.

[41] One whose chariot has been burnt.

[42]*Chakshu* means eye. That is the reason the knowledge is called *chakshushi*.

[43] The word used in the text is *yaviyasa*, which means Shudra.

[44] The word *vadava* means a mare.

[45] This is now a reference to the horses the gandharva is giving.

[46] Bibhatsu is one of Arjuna's names.

[47] An explanation is needed about the giving of a weapon. This act of giving doesn't involve the physical act of giving something and has more to do with teaching the mantras required to release and withdraw a weapon. Therefore, giving a weapon away did not mean that the giver ceased to possess it. What was being given was the knowledge.

[48] Keep fire burning in the household.

[49] Indra.

[50] Descendant of Tapati's lineage.

[51] The next sentence makes it clear that this is the sun-god.

[52] The sun.

[53] The one with many rays; a name for the sun.

[54] A name for the sun.

[55] Another name for Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth.

[56] The word used is *rambha,* which means a plantain tree. Thus, one with thighs like a plantain tree. However, Rambha is also the name of a beautiful *apsara* and one can also translate this as one with thighs like those of Rambha.

[57] A name for the sun.

[58] This can mean different things. It can mean a rainbow, described as Indra's bow (Shakra is another name for Indra), when the time is right for a rainbow. Alternatively, it can mean a flag erected when the time is right for Indra's festival.

[59] Vashishtha.

[60] The sun.

[61] A name for the sun.

[62] A name for the sun.

[63] A name for the sun.

[64] A name for the sun.

[65] Gopati means lord of cows and is another name for the sun.

[66] Samvarana.

[67] Indra.

[68] Samvarana.

[69] Indra.

[70] Indra.

[71] Vashishtha's.

[72] Vishvamitra and his sons are known as the Kushikas. Kushika was Vishvamitra's grandfather. According to some accounts, Kushika was Vishvamitra's father.

[73] The six different tastes are *katu* (pungent), *amla* (sour), *madhur* (sweet), *lavana* (salty), *tikta* (bitter) and *kashaya* (astringent).

[74] Vishvamitra.

[75] In this shloka, the cow's name is given as Nandi. However, Nandini is more common and subsequent shlokas say Nandini.

[76] Vishvamitra.

[77] Vashishtha.

[78] The vow of being forgiving.

[79] Often used as a term for the Persians.

[80] Mountain-dwelling barbarians.

[81] Often identified with Scythians.

[82] Often identified with Greeks.

[83] Mountainous tribes who lived through hunting.

[84] Inhabitants from the south.

[85] Identified with the inhabitants of Sri Lanka.

[86] Barbarians.

[87] Inhabitants of a country to the north.

[88] Barbarians, non-Aryans, those who did not speak Sanskrit.

[89] Vishvamitra.

[90] Nectar, ambrosia, the beverage of the gods.

[91] In the sense that the king should have yielded the way to a Brahmana.

[92] Officiating priest to King Kalmashapada.

[93] Vishvamitra.

[94] Shakti.

[95] Kalmashapada.

[96]*Mitrasaha* can also be translated as 'with his friends'. However, no friends have been mentioned. So Mitrasaha is more likely to be one of Kalmashapada's names.

[97]*Pasha* means noose or bond and Vipasha is something that frees one from a bond. Vipasha is identified with the river Beas.

[98] Himavati can be the specific name for a river. Alternatively, it can also be a general term for any river descending from the Himalayas.

[99] Shatadru is a river with a hundred streams and is identified as the river Sutlej.

[100] This is a reference to the six Vedangas.

[101] To his hermitage. The unblemished one is Vashishtha.

[102] Vashishtha.

[103] Kalmashapada.

[104] Rahu.

[105] The word used is *sandhya*, which can mean dawn, as well as dusk.

[106] This story is taken up later, and we learn why Kalmashapada requested Vashishtha to impregnate the queen.

[107] The king.

[108] Meaning the king, who had now been freed from the curse of the rakshasa.

[109] One of the twenty-seven nakshatras.

[110] Indra's capital.

[111]*Parasu* means lifeless or dead.

[112] Shakti's son Parashara.

[113] The Brahmanas.

[114] There are fourteen *lokas* (worlds). Seven are above the ground and seven are below. This is a reference to the seven that are above the ground—*bhurloka, bhuvarloka, svarloka, maharloka, janarloka, taparloka* and *brahmaloka* (*satyaloka*).

[115] That is, unless something is done about the anger.

[116] Of dharma, artha and kama.

[117] A horse is *vadava* and a horse's head is called *vadavamukha, mukha* meaning face. This submarine fire is thus called vadavamukha. Since *anala* means fire, it is also called *vadavanala*.

[118] Shakti's son Parashara.

[119] Because they had nothing to do with Shakti's death.

[120] Kalmashapada.

[1] Victory interpreted as winning Droupadi's hand.

[2] Droupadi.

[3] One of Arjuna's names.

[4] *Yantra.*

[5] Agallochum, a soft, resinous wood with an aromatic smell burnt as perfume.

[6] That is, those of the lunar dynasty, an epithet for the Panchalas.

[7] Kandarpa, one of the names of the god of love.

[8] Droupadi.

[9] Kubera.

[10] The giant birds in general.

[11] The nagas.

[12] Semi-divine species.

[13] Celestial singers.

[14] Halayudha is one of Balarama's names. *Hala* means plough, *ayudha* means weapon. Halayudha is one with the plough as one's weapon.

[15] Krishna.

[16] Krishna.

[17] Balarama.

[18] Another name of Arjuna's.

[19] Therefore, they did not notice the Pandavas.

[20] Pritha is Kunti's name and only Yudhishthira, Bhima and Arjuna were Kunti's sons. Nakula and Sahadeva were Madri's sons.

[21] *Dundubhi.*

[22] The science of archery. In general, the knowledge of arms.

[23] Varnas; the Shudras are not mentioned here.

[24] Indra.

[25] Bhima and Arjuna, who had not left the assembly. Arjuna had only left the arena.

[26] Krishna.

[27] Bhima.

[28] Usually a name used for Krishna, but here used for Balarama.

[29] *Karaka*, more specifically, water pots made out of coconut shells.

[30] One of Karna's names.

[31] Radha's son, that is, Karna.

[32] In the shower of arrows, because they were swiftly shooting arrows at each other.

[33] Parashurama.

[34] Dhanur Veda.

[35] Indra.

[36] Indra.

[37] Arjuna.

[38] Arjuna.

[39] Purandara is Indra's name. Hence, Indra's weapon.

[40] With this wonderful feat.

[41] Kripa was Sharadvata's son.

[42] It is not very clear who this Brahmana leading the way is, and must be a reference to Dhoumya.

[43] Krishna.

[44] Balarama.

[45] One without enemies, Yudhishthira's epithet.

[46] One of Yudhishthira's names.

[47] Kunti.

[48] Meaning, the south. This is a reference to the sage Agastya's journey to the south.

[49] In the morning.

[50] The own varna means a Kshatriya. The higher varna means a Brahmana.

[51] The word used is *vama*, which means left, as well as lower being. In this context, lower being seems best.

[52] The word 'sons' is used here in the sense of descendants.

[53] The daityas. Although the word Indra isn't directly used, the suggestion is clearly that he resembled Indra.

[54] The kings.

[55] Yudhishthira, Nakula and Sahadeva, who had returned earlier.

[56] Synonym for kusha grass.

[57] Yudhishthira.

[58] The priest.

[59]*Shulka.*

[60] Tribe, family or race, for want of a better word.

[1] The messenger.

[2] The Pandavas.

[3] Drupada.

[4] That is, to find out the caste they belonged to.

[5] Drupada.

[6] Semi-divine species.

[7] Droupadi.

[8] The arrangement for the marriage would depend on what caste the Pandavas came from.

[9] Drupada.

[10] Drupada.

[11] The Pandavas. Drupada assured them that he would help them get back their kingdom.

[12] Varanavata.

[13] Yudhishthira.

[14] Drupada.

[15] The Pandavas.

[16] Arjuna.

[17] Arjuna.

[18] Dhrishtadyumna. The text is such that it could also mean Drupada, ruler of Panchala.

[19] Krishna Dvaipayana.

[20] The text actually says bipeds.

[21] Meaning probably Drupada. Parshata is a family name, used for both Drupada and Dhrishtadyumna.

[22] Kunti's son, Yudhishthira.

[23] Drupada's.

[24] Yama.

[25] Meaning, human beings.

[26] Indra.

[27] Brahma.

[28] The gods.

[29] *Pundarika*, usually a white lotus.

[30] The river Ganga.

[31] Indra, the vajra is Indra's weapon.

[32] Indra.

[33] Indra.

[34] The king of mountains (*giriraja*) means high and lofty mountains, but is also a name for the Himalayas.

[35] Indra.

[36] The other god. As will become clear, this other god was none other than Shiva or Mahadeva.

[37] Indra.

[38] Shiva or Mahadeva; literally the lord of the mountains.

[39] One of Indra's names; literally the performer of a hundred sacrifices.

[40] Indra.

[41] Shiva.

[42] Indra.

[43] Shiva.

[44] Lakshmi.

[45] The five Indras.

[46] Shiva.

[47] Narayana.

[48] Narayana.

[49] The white hair.

[50] Arjuna.

[51] Shiva.

[52] Shiva.

[53] Parshata is one of Drupada's names.

[54] Brahma.

[55] Of many husbands.

[56] Vyasa.

[57] Drupada.

[58] Dhoumya.

[59] Yudhishthira.

[60] That is, Bhima got married on the next day, Arjuna on the next, and so on.
[61] Vyasa.
[62] That is, she regained her virginity after the earlier day's marriage.
[63] Drupada.
[64] The Pandavas.
[65] Around her wrists.
[66] Indra's wife.
[67] Indra.
[68] The fire-god's wife.
[69] The fire-god.
[70] The moon-god's wife.
[71] The moon-god.
[72] Kubera's wife.
[73] Kubera, the god of wealth.
[74] Yudhishthira.
[75] Krishna.
[76] Krishna.
[77] Krishna.
[78] Krishna.

[1] The Pandavas.

[2] Shakuni.

[3] Arjuna.

[4] Kunti.

[5] That is, the Pandavas.

[6] Droupadi.

[7] Karna.

[8] The Pandavas.

[9] Duryodhana.

[10] Son of Radha, that is, Karna.

[11] The Pandavas.

[12] Hastinapura.

[13] Panchala.

[14] Kunti.

[15] Those employed by the Kouravas to sow seeds of dissension and jealousy in the minds of the Pandavas.

[16] Droupadi.

[17] Because Droupadi has many husbands.

[18] Bhima.

[19] Arjuna.

[20] Karna.

[21] Droupadi.

[22] Droupadi.

[23] Drupada.

[24] Dhrishtadyumna.

[25] Descendant of Vrishni, meaning Krishna.

[26] A distant ancestor of both the Kouravas and the Pandavas; the son of Dushyanta and Shakuntala and the origin of the name Bharatavarsha.

[27] The slayer of Paka, a demon, is Indra.

[28] A complete army had four components (*chaturanga*)—elephants, chariots, cavalry and infantry.

[29] Dhritarashtra.

[30] That is, the Pandavas.

31 Indra.

32 Drupada.

33 To Hastinapura.

34 One of Duryodhana's brothers.

35 Bhishma and Drona.

36 The minister, Mahakarni.

37 The king, Ambuvicha.

38 The king, Ambuvicha.

39 Bhishma and Drona.

40 A famous king who performed many sacrifices.

41 For your own sons.

42 The Pandavas'.

43 Arjuna.

44 Indra.

45 Nakula and Sahadeva.

46 Balarama.

47 Krishna.

48 The Yadavas.

49 Kunti's.

50 Vidura.

51 The Pandavas.

52 Droupadi.

53 Drupada.

54 Drupada.

55 Vidura.

56 Krishna.

57 Krishna.

58 Hastinapura.

[1] Nakula and Sahadeva.
[2] Balarama.
[3] Balarama and Krishna.
[4] The Pandavas.
[5] Krishna.
[6] The word used here for Hastinapura is Nagasahrya.
[7] The Pandavas.
[8] Yudhishthira.
[9] The Pandavas.
[10] Bhishma.
[11] Yudhishthira.
[12] Indra.
[13] The capital of the nagas.
[14] Weapons that could kill a hundred warriors at a time.
[15] The Pandavas were also descended from Kuru.
[16] Kubera.
[17] Mango trees.
[18] Hog plums.
[19] The *kadamba* tree.
[20] Tree with red blossoms.
[21] Tree with yellow fragrant flowers.
[22] Variety of tree, another name for the champaka.
[23] Variety of champaka.
[24] Breadfruit tree.
[25] Breadfruit tree.
[26] A tall tree.
[27] Palm tree.
[28] Fragrant tree that buds at the time of rains.
[29] Tree with fragrant flowers.
[30] Tree with fragrant flowers.
[31] Myrobalan.
[32] Tree with red or white flowers.

[33] Name of a tree.

[34] Rose apple.

[35] The red trumpet flower.

[36] Name of a tree.

[37] Creeper that surrounds mango trees.

[38] Oleanders.

[39] Coral tree.

[40] The ruddy goose.

[41] Dhritarashtra.

[42] The Pandavas.

[43] Balarama.

[44] Dwaraka or Dwarika, in today's Gujarat. Sometimes, Dvarvati is used instead of Dvaravati. Literally, the place with gates or doors.

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